I came into the course with some experience, and a lot of frustration. For a few years now (I’ve lost track of how many) I’ve been working to develop software tools to extract, transform, and merge data from multiple databases - with no support from IT or management. The goal is eliminating the need to manually extract the data and try to manage it in multiple spreadsheets. With one planned piece of functionality left to go, one of my cohorts sold the idea that it would be much easier to complete the task with Python.

What he failed to mention was that he didn’t know Python anywhere near as well as he had implied - and we found ourselves struggling to make progress. We asked for resources and support from IT and management to no avail.

Practically begging for resources we finally got some programming help - from a so called self trained Python programmer. Though as it turned out, he wasn’t so much a programmer as a Googler. His programming style was to search Google for code that looked or sounded like it might work for his needs, try it out, modify as needed, and look for something else if it didn’t work. He couldn’t explain how or why the code worked when it did, and troubleshooting non-functioning code was completely out of the question.

Even asking about his search methods was met with unsatisfactory answers, “I just keep throwing more words at it until I find something.”

I even tried taking a class, and that instructor was no better.

Him: “Put this in the code to make it work.”

Me: “What does it do?”

Him: “It makes the code work.”

Me: “But why does it make the code work?”

Him: “Because the code needs it to work.”

Me: “But what does it actually do in the program?”

Him: “It makes it work. Aren’t you listening?”

The majority of the course was summed up with “Whatever you’re trying to do, someone else has probably done it, so just Google it.” The school actually gave a full refund for the tuition and other fees when the class was over.

Previously used Pycharm and Python based on books, peers, and websites such as Stack Exchange, Stack Overflow, W3 Schools, and others.

Minimal use of Git, have use subversion for version control.

Interchangeable or incorrect use of terms caused confusion.

Online sources may not include comprehensive descriptions of how or why the code works.

Some descriptions are too high level for novice users.

Some code doesn’t work, but no way to understand why.

Some descriptions/explanations show only a superficial understanding of what is happening.

Better understanding of the terms used for the structural components of the code.