

# **Test-driven development with Go**

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# Introduction

*General intro blurb; why this book?; blah blah Go*

## The product vision

In this book I will show you how to create an online service to generate QR codes, using nothing but Go and its standard libraries.

QR codes are two-dimensional barcodes that can be used to encode all kinds of information. Many smartphones have apps to scan QR codes, and you've probably seen them before. If not, this is a typical QR code:



Example of a QR code

At the end of this book you will have a program that allows you to generate every QR code possible using nothing but HTTP calls. In the process, you will learn a lot about idiomatic Go, its standard library, and its excellent support for test-driven development.

## Intended audience

This book is aimed at beginning and experienced programmers that want to learn about real world, test-driven development in Go. This book is not an introduction to Go, and it assumes that you have at least done the online interactive [Tour of Go](http://tour.golang.org)<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup><http://tour.golang.org>

## Requirements

It is possible to read this book without every touching anything but your e-reader. However, if you want a more interactive experience you can build all the samples in this book with just a few tools:

**Go** It might seem obvious, but Go is the number one dependency for this book. You can download it from [the Go website](http://golang.org)<sup>2</sup>. If you're working on OS X, you can install Go using [Homebrew](http://brew.sh)<sup>3</sup>. Most Linux distributions provide Go packages for their package manager.

### A command line shell

Using Go is best done using the command line. You should have a Bash-compatible shell at your disposal to replay the samples in this book. Most Linux installations have Bash as their default shell; OS X users can use `Terminal.app`; and Windows users can download [Cygwin](http://www.cygwin.com)<sup>4</sup> or [Git Bash](http://msysgit.github.io)<sup>5</sup>.

### An editor

Finally, you need an editor to write your Go code. There is a large number of options here, but [Sublime Text](http://www.sublimetext.com)<sup>6</sup> seems to be very popular. The default Go installation comes with excellent plugins or Emacs and Vim.

## About the code samples

### Go code

This book contains a lot of code samples. Go code is the most prominent, and such code is always annotated with a filename and line numbers; these numbers do not necessarily start at 1, but refer to the position in the file at the time of writing. Each fragment will contain the filename as its header, and it is usually followed by some plain text annotations.

fragment.go

---

```
17 func (r *Receiver) MyFunc() err {
18     print("Anything")
19     print("Even more")
20 }
```

---

17 Some interesting information about line 17

---

<sup>2</sup><http://golang.org>

<sup>3</sup><http://brew.sh>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.cygwin.com>

<sup>5</sup><http://msysgit.github.io>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.sublimetext.com>

**17–20**

Some interesting information about the entire code block from line 17 up to (and including) line 20.

Sometimes a code samples lacks line numbers -- in such cases, the code is not actually included in the source code, but is meant to make a point.

go fmt highlights operator precedence

---

```
func Hypothetical(a b c int) int {  
    return 4*a*a + (b*c)/2  
}
```

---

## Command line sessions

Software development is an interplay between your editor and your command line. Relevant command line sessions are also included in this book, and presented like this:

### An interactive command line session

---

```
$ echo "Hello world"  
Hello world
```

```
$ cat HelloWorld.txt  
cat: HelloWorld.txt: No such file or directory
```

---

Command line sessions do not have line numbers, and always use \$ to indicate the prompt.

## Directory listings

In a few cases I have to refer to directory listings. These are always rooted in workspace, the general name for the directory where you store your source code.

### A directory listing

---

```
workspace/  
├─ bin/  
│   └─ qrcoded  
└─ src/  
    ├─ github.com/  
    │   └─ publysher/  
    │       └─ qrcoded/  
    │           └─ qrcoded.go
```

---

## Getting the code

All the source code in this book is published on <http://github.com/publysher/golang-tdd>; the master branch contains the end result and for each chapter there is a separate branch. The source code is licensed under an Open Source license.

# Hello World

In the best tradition of computer programming, I will start with a simple “Hello world” program. Using this program I will introduce you to the Go toolchain.

## Your first Go program

Writing Go starts with creating a new *workspace*, the directory where you will store all your Go code. Fire up an editor, create a new file called `qrcoded.go`<sup>7</sup> in your workspace and make sure it looks like this:

`qrcoded.go`

---

```
1 package main
2
3 import "fmt"
4
5 func main() {
6     fmt.Println("Hello QR Code")
7 }
```

---

If you have done the online Tour of Go<sup>8</sup>, this program will not pose any mystery to you. However, where the Tour of Go uses the interactive Go Playground, this book will use the command line to compile, test and run your program.

## Compiling the program

Go is a compiled language, and running the program requires compiling it first. This is done using the `go build` command, which compiles your program into an executable. The name of the executable is identical to the name of the Go source file containing the `main()` function. In this case, the resulting binary is called `qrcoded`.

---

<sup>7</sup>`qrcoded` stands for *QR code daemon*; this is a Unix naming convention for programs intended to run in the background.

<sup>8</sup>You really should do the Tour of Go if you want to fully appreciate the code samples. It can be found at <http://tour.golang.org>



### Using `go build`

---

```
$ go build qrcoded.go
```

```
$ ls
```

```
qrcoded                qrcoded.go
```

```
$ ./qrcoded
```

```
Hello QR Code
```

---

The `go` tool is the center of the Go ecosystem. It defines a number of commands to manage your software development, thus obviating the need for any kind of external build management tool. One of these commands is the `clean` command, which removes all compiled artefacts from your workspace:

### Using `go clean`

---

```
$ ls
```

```
qrcoded                qrcoded.go
```

```
$ go clean
```

```
$ ls
```

```
qrcoded.go
```

---

The `go` tool has many more subcommands, and I will cover most of them in this book. Two commands deserve a special mention at this point: `go help`, which describes all available commands, and `go run`.

In the previous examples you might have noticed two things. In the first place, the “build, execute, clean” cycle is somewhat repetitive. And secondly, you might have noticed that the `go build` command is fast. This is not just because you are compiling a simple program – the Go compiler *is* impressively fast. In fact, a fast compile cycle was an essential part of Go’s design goals, and many design choices have been influenced by this goal.

The Go team has leveraged the speed of the compiler to make running your program even simpler:

### Using `go run`

---

```
$ go run qrcoded.go
```

```
Hello QR Code
```

---

## Code style and `go fmt`

Most languages have continuing debates on stylistic issues such as the virtues of spaces versus tabs, the optimal location of curly braces, and the ordering of imports. While such a debate can be fun from time to time, it's not productive.

The Go designers have taken a firm stance on the preferred code style, defining a style that is optimized for version control systems and code reviews. But instead of writing it down in a dusty corner of the internet, they have provided us with the `go fmt` tool:

### Fixing formatting issues

---

```
$ go fmt qrcoded.go
qrcoded.go
```

---

You might have theoretical, aesthetical or even religious objections to the choices made by Go, but it's a good idea to always `go fmt` your code. If only to prevent useless debates.

## A first skeleton for generating QR codes

“Hello World” is a good way to get started, but it is still a long way from the eventual goal: generating QR codes. So let's take the next step, and see what a program for generating QR codes could look like:

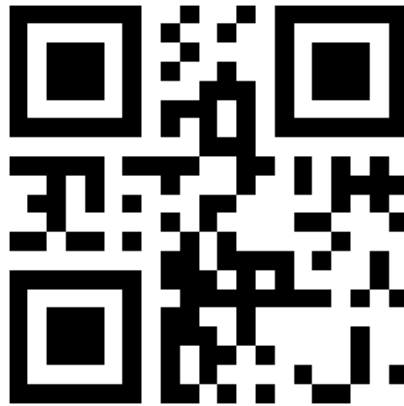
### qrcoded.go

---

```
1 package main
2
3 import (
4     "fmt"
5     "io/ioutil"
6 )
7
8 func main() {
9     fmt.Println("Hello QR Code")
10
11     qrcode := GenerateQRCode("555-2368")
12     ioutil.WriteFile("qrcode.png", qrcode, 0644)
13 }
```

---

- 11 Using the classical software engineering technique called *Wishful Thinking*, I have assumed the existence of a function that generates a QR code for a given input string. In this case the input is a phone number<sup>9</sup> and the expected output is an encoded PNG looking like this:



QR Code for 555-2368

- 12 Here I've used the `io/ioutil` package to easily create a file called `qrcode.png` in the current directory.

Of course, this code will not compile:

#### The effects of Wishful Thinking

---

```
$ go run qrcoded.go
./qrcoded.go:11: undefined: GenerateQRCode
```

---

Let's extend the code with the minimal amount necessary: a function called `GenerateQRCode` that takes a string and returns a byte slice.

#### qrcoded.go

---

```
15 func GenerateQRCode(code string) []byte {
16     return nil
17 }
```

---

This is enough to have the program work again.

---

<sup>9</sup>A famous number that I often want to call during weird debugging sessions.

### Creating a QR code

---

```
$ go run qrcoded.go
```

```
Hello QR Code
```

```
$ ls
```

```
qrcode.png          qrcoded.go
```

```
$ file qrcode.png
```

```
qrcode.png: empty
```

---

Success! Our code is one step closer to generating QR codes.

From here on, you can slowly flesh out the `GenerateQRCode` function; at each iteration you can go run the program and check the resulting file, either by using the `file` command or by opening it in an image editor and visually verifying that the correct QR code has been generated.

This is a perfectly valid approach, but I believe there is a better approach. It's called test-driven development and it is the main subject of this entire book. Continue to the next chapter to see it in action.

## Wrapping up

In this chapter I have introduced the `go` command and a number of its most important subcommands:

#### **go build**

Compile the program into an executable.

#### **go clean**

Remove all compiled artefacts.

#### **go run**

Compile the program, execute it, and clean up the generated executable.

I have also extended the base program to provide a minimal structure for generating barcodes, paving the way for the centerpiece of this book: test-driven development in Go.

# Test-driven development

Test-driven development is a strict discipline for creating modular, well-designed and testable code without doing any upfront design. It achieves this by making you work in extremely short cycles: create an automated test, write the minimum amount of code to satisfy that test, and refactor your code to improve the quality. This approach ensures a few nice properties of the resulting code:

1. Starting with a test forces you to think about the intended behavior;
2. Writing code based on a test forces you to write testable code;
3. Immediately refactoring the result forces you to think about your code and how it fits in the larger picture.

In this chapter I will describe how you can create an automated test suite with Go, and I will show two examples of the test, code, refactor cycle.

## Writing tests in Go

Writing tests is completely integrated in Go through the `go test` tool. This command searches for files matching `*_test.go` and executes all functions that match a specific pattern. Let's have a look at `go test`:

Running `go test`

---

```
$ go test
?      _/workspace/golang-tdd      [no test files]
```

---

As you can see, `go test` complains about the absence of test files. This is correct, because there aren't any files matching `*_test.go`. So go ahead and create a file called `qr coded_test.go`:

`qr coded_test.go`

---

```
1 package main
```

---

When you run `go test` again, the output is slightly different:

### Running `go test` with an empty test file

---

```
$ go test
testing: warning: no tests to run
PASS
ok      _/workspace/golang-tdd    0.018s
```

---

The tool no longer complains about missing test files, but it does complain about the absence of tests. Once again, this is correct, because we haven't written any test functions.

Writing a unit test in Go is a simple matter of creating a function that looks like `func TestXxx(t *testing.T)`, where `Xxx` is a name of your choosing. When you run `go test`, each function matching this pattern is executed in isolation. Using the methods defined in `testing.T` you can inform the test runner about test failures.

Let's extend `qr coded_test.go` with a first test: verifying that `GenerateQRCode` returns a useful value.

#### `qr coded_test.go`

---

```
1 package main
2
3 import (
4     "testing"
5 )
6
7 func TestGenerateQRCodeReturnsValue(t *testing.T) {
8     result := GenerateQRCode("555-2368")
9
10    if result == nil {
11        t.Errorf("Generated QRCode is nil")
12    }
13    if len(result) == 0 {
14        t.Errorf("Generated QRCode has no data")
15    }
16 }
```

---

**7–16** This block defines a unit test; the function signature matches `func TestXxx(t *testing.T)` and the body will be executed by `go test` as a single test.

**8** This line is the essence of the test: call the `GenerateQRCode` with specific data, and store the result for later inspection.

**10–15**

These lines contain the assertions of the test. The result is inspected, and if the result is undefined or empty, the test tool is informed of a failure by calling `t.Errorf`<sup>10</sup>.

So let's see what happens if we run `go test` again:

**Running `go test` with a failing unit test**


---

```
$ go test
--- FAIL: TestGenerateQRCodeReturnsValue (0.00 seconds)
    qrcoded_test.go:11: QRCode is nil
    qrcoded_test.go:14: QRCode has no data
FAIL
exit status 1
FAIL    _/workspace/golang-tdd    0.018s
```

---

This time `go test` clearly runs the new unit test<sup>11</sup>. And as expected, it fails. The framework clearly shows the name of the function that fails, the exact lines and the exact messages provided in the test.

At this point, it is time to write the minimal amount of code that will make this test work:

**qrcoded.go**


---

```
15 func GenerateQRCode(code string) []byte {
16     return []byte{0xFF}
17 }
```

---

The new implementation of `GenerateQRCode` is still terribly uninteresting, but it is enough to satisfy the test suite:

**Passing all the tests**


---

```
$ go test
PASS
ok      _/Users/yigalduppen/src/golang-tdd    0.018s
```

---

This time the tests passed. In itself this does not mean anything – the implementation of `GenerateQRCode` still does not generate any QR codes. But we now have a solid basis to practice some real test-driven development and slowly test our way to a functioning implementation.

---

<sup>10</sup>The effect of `t.Errorf` differs from typical asserts and expectations in other languages. Go tests will continue to execute, even if `t.Errorf` was called. This allows you to see all test failures at once. Many test frameworks in other languages suggest you should use only one assertion per test case to accomplish the same goal; no so in Go.

<sup>11</sup>Note how the test picks up the changes without any explicit compilation step on your side – when you run `go test`, it automatically recompiles your code, just like `go run`.

## Red, Green, Refactor

In the previous section I created a test for code that was not under test before. This is very useful, but it is *not* the same as test-driven development. At the beginning of this chapter I explained how test-driven development is characterized by a well-defined cycle, commonly known as the Red/Green/Refactor cycle:

**Red** The cycle starts by writing a test that captures the new requirement; this test is expected to fail. Many tools display test failures in red, hence the name.

### Green

The cycle continues by writing the minimal amount of code necessary to satisfy the tests. This name too is derived from the fact that many tools display test success in green. When you start practicing test-driven development, it is a common pitfall to write more than the minimal amount of code. Be aware of this, and keep asking yourself if you are doing more than the minimum required.

### Refactor

The latest step in the cycle is what makes test-driven development a viable process: it forces you to step back, to look at your code, and to improve its structure *without adding any functionality*. The refactor step is not an optional step<sup>12</sup> – without this step your code will quickly degenerate into a well-tested but incomprehensible mess.

Let's have a look at a real-world Red/Green/Refactor cycle by posing a new requirement: the byte slice returned by `GenerateQRCode` should represent a valid PNG image.

## Red

The first step is to create a new test that captures this requirement. Broadly speaking, there are two ways of approaching this: you can either check if the first eight bytes match the magic header<sup>13</sup> for PNGs, or you can just go ahead and decode the image – if an error occurs during decoding, you know that the byte slice did not represent a PNG.

If you're a paranoid reader, you might have detected a flaw in this reasoning: what if the decoding algorithm contains a bug, which causes an error for perfectly valid PNGs? This is a valid concern, and it shows why test-driven development is not a magic solution to bugs. Test-driven development is a technique to develop *your* software; you will have to *assume* that dependencies outside your scope, such as the Go standard library, work as advertised.

This assumption is carried on throughout this book, and it is the reason why this next test uses the decode-to-see-if-it-works technique:

---

<sup>12</sup>At least not in test-driven development. If you ignore the refactoring step, you are practicing test-first development. This is also a viable development strategy, but it requires upfront design.

<sup>13</sup>Every PNG file starts with the bytes 0x89, 0x50, 0x4E, 0x47, 0x0D, 0x0A, 0x1A, 0x0A. If it doesn't, it isn't a PNG.



**qrcoded\_test.go**


---

```

13 func TestGenerateQRCodeGeneratesPNG(t *testing.T) {
14     result := GenerateQRCode("555-2368")
15     buffer := bytes.NewBuffer(result)
16     _, err := png.Decode(buffer)
17
18     if err != nil {
19         t.Errorf("Generated QRCode is not a PNG: %s", err)
20     }
21 }

```

---

**1–12** In order to keep the code samples to the point, I will often show only the relevant part of a file. I will also omit any imports that are introduced by the code. In this case, the imports you do not see are `bytes` and `image/png`.

**13–21**

Here I have introduced an entirely new test function. This is not strictly required by the Red/Green/Refactor cycle – it is also perfectly valid to extend an existing test to capture the new functionality.

**16** This line contains the decoding logic: I decode the byte array, discarding any positive results, and focus on the error. The next three lines verify that this error did *not* occur. Note how `png.Decode` does not work on byte slices but on types satisfying the `io.Reader` interface. This is why line 15 wraps the resulting byte slice in a `bytes.Buffer`.

Knowing the current state of the `GenerateQRCode` function, it is safe to assume that this will make the test fail. Nevertheless, don't do anything until you know for sure:

**Going red**


---

```

$ go test
--- FAIL: TestGenerateQRCodeGeneratesPNG (0.00 seconds)
    qrcoded_test.go:26: Generated QRCode is not a PNG: unexpected EOF
FAIL
exit status 1
FAIL    _/workspace/golang-tdd    0.020s

```

---

This is the intended result; now it is time to extend the `GenerateQRCode` function with the minimal amount of code to satisfy this test.

## Green

Implementing this new functionality follows the same pattern as our test: create an image and encode it using `png.Encode`. Once again, I have assumed that `png.Encode` works as advertised. Never test external dependencies in your unit tests.

`qrcoded.go`

---

```
18 func GenerateQRCode(code string) []byte {
19     img := image.NewRGBA(image.Rect(0, 0, 21, 21))
20     buf := new(bytes.Buffer)
21     _ = png.Encode(buf, img)
22
23     return buf.Bytes()
24 }
```

---

If you're new to test-driven development, this implementation might feel like cheating. After all, we're just exercising the Go standard library, assuming that it works correctly, and not doing any real work. However, in a few weeks, when the internals of `GenerateQRCode` will have changed beyond recognition, the test will remain a valid test, even if the implementation has changed completely.

The more you practice test-driven development, the more you will get rid of this feeling that you're cheating. Because test-driven development requires you to make small baby steps, every piece of implementation will feel trivial. The real value is not in the steps themselves, but in the final product.

Even though I made a trivial change, which is sure to work, you should always check the result:

Going green

---

```
$ go test
PASS
ok      _/workspace/golang-tdd    0.021s
```

---

## Refactor

The final step in the cycle is the Refactor step. I've said it before and I will say it again: the refactoring step is not optional in test-driven development. Without it, you're practicing test-first development and that requires a good upfront design. If you're so inclined, you can see the refactor step as the Prime Directive of test-driven development.

Each refactor step starts with a question: how can I make this code better at expressing its intent, without changing the functionality?

In this case, even though the amount of code is still very limited, there are two sore points. The first is the lack of proper error handling. However, correct error handling can be seen as a non-functional *requirement*, so I will tackle this in the next section using test-driven development.

The second point is more subtle. If you look at `GenerateQRCode`, you can see that I am juggling around with a `bytes.Buffer` in order to satisfy the signature of the `png.Encode` function. Or, if you look at it from another direction, I have introduced this buffer because `GenerateQRCode` wants to return a byte slice. And that byte slice is only used to write the image to a file.

This refactoring step will get rid of the buffer. Instead of passing around byte slices, I will convert the code to work with anything that satisfies the `io.Writer` interface, just like the `png.Encode` function does. Let's have a look at my refactored program:

qr coded.go

---

```
11 func main() {
12     fmt.Println("Hello QR Code")
13
14     file, _ := os.Create("qrcode.png")
15     defer file.Close()
16
17     GenerateQRCode(file, "555-2368")
18 }
19
20 func GenerateQRCode(w io.Writer, code string) {
21     img := image.NewRGBA(image.Rect(0, 0, 21, 21))
22     _ = png.Encode(w, img)
23 }
```

---

## 20–23

The `GenerateQRCode` function now accepts any argument that satisfies the `io.Writer` interface. This is a common idiom in Go, where byte-oriented input and output is preferably done through `io.Reader` and `io.Writer`. Using the writer as the first argument is also common in the standard library.

The use of the writer has made the function much simpler – gone are the lines of code where I was managing a buffer. Instead, the function now only shows what I want it to show: create an image and encode it.

## 14–15

Instead of using the `ioutil.WriteFile` function, I now explicitly create a file and make sure it's closed when the main function exits. For now, I've also explicitly ignored the possible resulting error; the underscore is a nice marker for later improvements.

- 17 Among others, `io.File` satisfies the `io.Writer` interface. This means that on this line I can just pass the file directly to the `GenerateQRCode` function. This removes the notion of byte slices and buffers from the program entirely.

This example shows how a little refactoring can dramatically improve the readability (and understandability) of your code. As you will see in the next section, this change has also improved the testability of the code. And it bears repeating that *this* and only this is the promise of test-driven development: clear, modular, testable code.

But let's not celebrate yet. As it stands, this change has broken the tests, and they will no longer even compile:

### The effects of my refactoring

---

```
$ go test
# _/workspace/golang-tdd
./qrcoded_test.go:10: cannot use "555-2368" (type string) as type io.Writer in function argument:
    string does not implement io.Writer (missing Write method)
./qrcoded_test.go:10: not enough arguments in call to GenerateQRCode
./qrcoded_test.go:10: GenerateQRCode("555-2368") used as value
./qrcoded_test.go:21: cannot use "555-2368" (type string) as type io.Writer in function argument:
    string does not implement io.Writer (missing Write method)
./qrcoded_test.go:21: not enough arguments in call to GenerateQRCode
./qrcoded_test.go:21: GenerateQRCode("555-2368") used as value
FAIL    _/workspace/golang-tdd [build failed]
```

---

The tests still assume that `GenerateQRCode` takes one argument and returns a byte buffer. Luckily, test-driven development has once again forced us to take small baby steps, so fixing this is trivial.

### qrcoded\_test.go

---

```
10 func TestGenerateQRCodeReturnsValue(t *testing.T) {
11     buffer := new(bytes.Buffer)
12     GenerateQRCode(buffer, "555-2368")
13
14     if buffer.Len() == 0 {
15         t.Errorf("No QRCode generated")
16     }
17 }
18
19 func TestGenerateQRCodeGeneratesPNG(t *testing.T) {
20     buffer := new(bytes.Buffer)
21     GenerateQRCode(buffer, "555-2368")
22     _, err := png.Decode(buffer)
23
24     if err != nil {
```

```
25         t.Errorf("Generated QRCode is not a PNG: %s", err)
26     }
27 }
```

---

And after this, `go test` is back to green. Note how the first test has become simpler; because it is impossible for `buffer` to become `nil`, it is no longer required to check for it. Nevertheless, even though the tests have changed, they still test exactly the same functionality.

This example also shows a real problem in test-driven development: *overtesting*. Many refactorings not only touch the code under test, but also the tests themselves. This means that if you have too many tests, you will spend more time fixing your tests than actually improving your code<sup>14</sup>.

In fact, if you look at the current code you see that there are two tests for the same happy path. So let's reduce the amount of tests while testing the same amount of functionality:

#### qrcoded\_test.go

---

```
10 func TestGenerateQRCodeGeneratesPNG(t *testing.T) {
11     buffer := new(bytes.Buffer)
12     GenerateQRCode(buffer, "555-2368")
13
14     if buffer.Len() == 0 {
15         t.Errorf("No QRCode generated")
16     }
17
18     _, err := png.Decode(buffer)
19
20     if err != nil {
21         t.Errorf("Generated QRCode is not a PNG: %s", err)
22     }
23 }
```

---

This test is subtly different from the previous two tests – it covers exactly the same requirements, but changes in the `GenerateQRCode` function signature now only require one test to change.

As a general rule, you should try to have exactly one unit test for each happy flow. If your unit under test provides multiple happy flows, it is worth considering to split up your unit into multiple units.

Of course, no step in test-driven development is complete without running `go test`:

---

<sup>14</sup>This of course begs the question: how many tests should you write? For now, the answer is: just enough. In a later chapter I will go into the notion of test coverage, which will help to quantify the notions of 'overtesting' and 'just enough'.

Never forget to run `go test`

---

```
$ go test
PASS
ok      _/workspace/golang-tdd    0.021s
```

---

This concludes the first real test-driven development cycle in this book. I've used multiple pages to explain what I've been doing, but in real life this cycle would take me about five to ten minutes at most, including at least five test runs.

Of course, such a workflow is only feasible if running your unit tests is fast enough. My personal definition of 'fast enough' is about five seconds. The `go test` tool has an overhead of approximately one second on reasonable systems; this gives me enough room to run somewhere between a hundred and two hundred unit tests. In this book I will show several techniques to keep the running time of your tests as short as possible.

## Testing error handling

As I said in the previous section, it is time for a new requirement; a non-functional requirement actually, and that is to have proper error handling. The call to `png.Decode` can result in an error, but `GenerateQRCode` does not do anything with that.

The non-test-driven approach would be to change the function like this:

qr coded.go

---

```
20 func GenerateQRCode(w io.Writer, code string) error {
21     img := image.NewRGBA(image.Rect(0, 0, 21, 21))
22     return png.Encode(w, img)
23 }
```

---

In fact, that is exactly what I will do, but test-driven development requires a failing test before I can make this change. And this is not as trivial as it sounds.

## Red

The `GenerateQRCode` function should return an error whenever `png.Encode` returns an error. In other words, the test should force `png.Encode` to return an error and then test that `GenerateQRCode` results in an error. Let's start by looking at the documentation for `png.Encode`:

```
func Encode(w io.Writer, m image.Image) error
```

Encode writes the Image `m` to `w` in PNG format. Any Image may be encoded, but images that are not `image.NRGBA` might be encoded lossily.

This is not very encouraging. The signature clearly states that `png.Encode` can return an error, but the documentation doesn't state *how* this can happen. You could of course trace the source code, but luckily the Go standard library has a few conventions:

1. Any error that can occur is named and documented in the documentation of that package.
2. Invalid arguments generally cause an error; `nil` arguments generally cause a panic.
3. Any error that occurs by using one of the arguments is passed on, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

Let's compare these criteria to `png.Encode`:

1. The documentation for `image/png` specifies two errors, `FormatError` and `UnsupportedError`, but these errors can only occur during *decoding*. In other words, `png.Encode` will not return an error by itself.
2. Creating an invalid interface will be caught at compile-time, and creating an invalid image is not possible in this case – the call to `image.NewRGBA` specifies a non-empty rectangle, which is guaranteed to return a valid image. For both arguments, passing `nil` is not an option either, because we are not testing panic conditions.
3. The `image.Image` type contains no relevant methods that can result in an error. But the `io.Writer` interface does. This is a likely candidate.

So, in order to test the error flow of `GenerateQRCode`, we need something that implements `io.Writer` and will cause an error on `Write`. One option would be to use a read-only temp file, but there is a better approach: using a *test double*.

A test double is a simplified implementation of a type that exhibits specific behavior to help in testing. Traditionally, there are five types of test doubles:

### Dummies

Types without any behavior at all, provided only because the signature of the unit under test requires them.

### Stubs

Types implementing the minimum amount of behavior to satisfy a test.

### Mocks

Partial implementations for which you can define expectations on how their methods will be called.

### Spies

Partial implementations on which you can assert that specific methods have been called.

### Fakes

Full, lightweight implementations such as in-memory databases.

Many languages have libraries that allow you to create stubs, mocks and spies at runtime. However, Go only allows you to define new types at compile time, so using test doubles in Go takes a bit more work. Luckily the concept of interfaces in Go makes it only a tiny bit of extra work.

As stated before, the test needs an implementation of `io.Writer` that generates an error on `Write`. For now, it is enough to define a simple stub:

qrcooded\_test.go

---

```
29 type ErrorWriter struct{}
30
31 func (e *ErrorWriter) Write(b []byte) (int, error) {
32     return 0, errors.New("Expected error")
33 }
34
35 func TestGenerateQRCodePropagatesErrors(t *testing.T) {
36     w := new(ErrorWriter)
37     err := GenerateQRCode(w, "555-2368")
38
39     if err == nil || err.Error() != "Expected error" {
40         t.Errorf("Error not propagated correctly, got %v", err)
41     }
42 }
```

---

29 This line defines a new type, aptly called `ErrorWriter`.

31–33

This function turns the `ErrorWriter` into a stub satisfying `io.Writer`. Its implementation is straightforward: every call to `Write` will return an error.

These three innocuous lines are exemplary of idiomatic Go. Creating a type that satisfies `io.Writer` is extremely easy; this means that my previous refactoring which introduced the `io.Writer` argument made it a lot easier to test the function.

35–42

These lines define the new test; the result of `GenerateQRCode` is inspected and asserted to be the expected error.

Running `go test` will once again fail. Not because of missing functionality, but because the code no longer compiles:



### Running go test fails once again

---

```
$ go test
# _/workspace/golang-tdd
./qrcoded_test.go:37: GenerateQRCode(w, "555-2368") used as value
FAIL    _/Users/yigalduppen/src/golang-tdd [build failed]
```

---

The test now assumes that `GenerateQRCode` returns an error, which it does not. So let's change the `GenerateQRCode` function a little bit:

#### qrcoded.go

---

```
20 func GenerateQRCode(w io.Writer, code string) error {
21     img := image.NewRGBA(image.Rect(0, 0, 21, 21))
22     png.Encode(w, img)
23     return nil
24 }
```

---

This change is enough to make the test fail successfully.

#### Successful failure

---

```
$ go test
--- FAIL: TestGenerateQRCodePropagatesErrors (0.00 seconds)
    qrcoded_test.go:36: Error not propagated correctly, got <nil>
FAIL
exit status 1
FAIL    _/Users/yigalduppen/src/golang-tdd    0.020s
```

---

## Green

In the introduction of this section I already gave away the solution:

#### qrcoded.go

---

```
20 func GenerateQRCode(w io.Writer, code string) error {
21     img := image.NewRGBA(image.Rect(0, 0, 21, 21))
22     return png.Encode(w, img)
23 }
```

---

This change is enough to make the tests work.

You might wonder why I did not do this immediately while I was changing the signature of `GenerateQRCode`. After all, what makes `png.Decode(...); return nil` so much better than `return png.Decode(...)?`

The reason for this is that the Red step must *always* result in a failing test. This is not just because of dogma; it guarantees that your new test actually tests what you think it tests.

Even though test-driven development dictates tiny steps, it is still very easy to make mistakes. If such a mistake occurs in a test, you might end up with a test that will suddenly fail when you least expect it, for no apparent reason at all. That's why test-driven development dictates a failing test.

## Refactor

As I said before, refactoring is not optional. However, at this point the amount of code under test is very small, and it seems structurally sound. So in this case I've decided to improve the error handling in `main`.

`qr coded.go`

---

```
11 func main() {
12     log.Println("Hello QR Code")
13
14     file, err := os.Create("qrcode.png")
15     if err != nil {
16         log.Fatal(err)
17     }
18     defer file.Close()
19
20     err = GenerateQRCode(file, "555-2368")
21     if err != nil {
22         log.Fatal(err)
23     }
24 }
```

---

All normal and error output is now handled using the `log` package instead of `fmt`. Early exits are taken care of by `log.Fatal`, which automatically calls `os.Exit(1)`. There are still no unit tests for the `main` function, so running `go test` stays green.

Yes, this really *is* cheating: I have only refactored code that is not under test. Believe me when I state that I have only done so for didactic purposes.

## Wrapping up

In this chapter I have introduced the `go test` unit test framework and I have shown how you can use this to practice test-driven development.

I have explained that merciless refactoring is a prerequisite for succesful test-driven development, and I have shown how this can indeed improve your code.

Furthermore, I have shown how a judicious use of small interfaces as arguments can make your Go code so much more testable.

In the next chapter I will give more examples of the Red/Green/Refactor cycle, giving some more examples on how you can create clean, idiomatic and testable Go code.

# Creating QR codes

Test-driven development is all about taking one small step at a time. Nevertheless, it still pays off to have a general sense of direction before you take the next step. In this chapter I will give a high-level overview of QR codes, and use test-driven development to sketch out the general direction.

## What is a QR code, exactly?

In the previous chapters I have shown some examples of QR codes, and you probably recognized them as such. Based on these examples, I could show you any possible QR code, and you would still recognize them as being QR codes. Unfortunately, this does not tell us anything about *how* you can generate a QR code.

QR codes are an officially standardized type of 2-dimensional barcode, and the nice people of ISO have explained all the gory details of QR codes in a document called ‘ISO/IEC 18004:2006(E) – QR Code 2005 bar code symbology specification’. With such a title, what can go wrong?

As it turns out, there are four distinct kinds of QR codes: they are called QR Code Model 1, QR Code Model 2, QR Code 2005 and Micro QR Code. Model 1 has been deprecated, so this book won’t bother with those. Model 2 QR codes are a strict subset of QR Code 2005 and don’t require any special treatment. Micro codes are very interesting, but in order to keep the scope down, this book will focus on generating QR Codes 2005.

So, to answer the question in this section’s title: a QR code is a 2-dimensional barcode pattern of dark and light squares, as specified by ISO/IEC 18002:2006(E).

## QR code terminology

QR Codes are a means of conveying some *input data*: a program encodes *input data* as a *pattern* of dark and light squares. This pattern can then be converted to an image and printed. The printed image can subsequently be scanned to obtain the original input data<sup>15</sup>.

The dark and light squares are called *modules*. The specification does not say anything about the exact color of the dark and light squares, but I will often refer to them as black and white modules.

The number of modules in a QR code is determined by its *version*. For example, a Version 1 QR code contains 21x21 modules; and the largest specified version, Version 40, contains 177x177 modules.

The pattern of a QR code is a combination of three different subpatterns: the *functional pattern*, which is always the same for each version, and is used to calibrate a scanner; the *encoding pattern*,

---

<sup>15</sup>Scanning and decoding QR codes is not covered in this book.

which contains the actual data you want to convey; and a *data masking pattern*, which is combined with the encoding pattern to prevent scanners from getting confused<sup>16</sup>.

The specification defines a lot more terminology, but for now this is enough.

## Creating a QR code

Creating a QR code follows a simple 8-step program. The end-user is expected to specify the input data, the desired level of error correction capabilities, and the program then does the following:

1. Data analysis – this is used to determine the kind of data to be encoded, which in turns defines the smallest possible version that can be used.
2. Data encoding – this converts the input data into a list of 8-bit codewords.
3. Error correction – this creates the error correction codes.
4. Message structuring – this combines the data and error correction codes into an optionally padded list of bits.
5. Module placement – this converts the message to an encoding pattern and combines it with the functional pattern.
6. Data masking – this applies different data masking patterns and selects the one with the best result.
7. Format and version information – this extends the pattern with format and version information, resulting in the final pattern.
8. Image creation – this converts the pattern to an actual image.

Each of these steps has its own challenges, but this is how you create a QR code in a nutshell.

## Introducing versions

The current implementation is still a long way from implementing the 8-step program. But test-driven development is all about baby steps, so let's start with the first step: versions. At this moment, the notion of versions does not exist. So let's create a test that incorporates this notion.

### Red

The first thing versions indicate, is the size of the pattern. For example, a Version 1 QR Code has a pattern of 21x21 modules. It doesn't sound too hard to create a test for this:

---

<sup>16</sup>Note how the specification does nothing to prevent *us* from getting confused.

`qrcoded_test.go`


---

```

31 func TestVersionDeterminesSize(t *testing.T) {
32     buffer := new(bytes.Buffer)
33     GenerateQRCode(buffer, "555-2368", Version(1))
34
35     img, _ := png.Decode(buffer)
36     if width := img.Bounds().Dx(); width != 21 {
37         t.Errorf("Version 1, expected 21 but got %d", width)
38     }
39 }

```

---

33 Here I've changed the signature of `GenerateQRCode` to take an additional version parameter. Note how I haven't said anything about the exact *type* of versions, just that when I say `Version(1)`, I get a valid representation of Version 1.

36-38

And here I check that the width of the resulting image is indeed 21 pixels wide. Technically speaking, the size of the image is not really related to the size of the pattern, but hey, baby steps.

Once again, I've written a test that changes the expected signature of `GenerateQRCode`, so `go test` will not even compile correctly.

Fixing the signature results in the following code:

`qrcoded.go`


---

```

26 func GenerateQRCode(w io.Writer, code string, version Version) error {
27     img := image.NewRGBA(image.Rect(0, 0, 21, 21))
28     return png.Encode(w, img)
29 }
30
31 type Version int8

```

---

31 Here I've decided to introduce `Version` as a top-level type. It is an alias for `int8`, so new versions can be created by casting integers like this: `Version(24)`.

26 The new version parameter matches the new signature. This of course results in new compilation errors, so the old tests and main function have to be changed as well. Since none of these tests depends on the version, any expression evaluating to a version can be used. I've arbitrarily chosen `Version(1)`.

After fixing all the calls to `GenerateQRCode`, the tests finally run. And pass.

As I explained in the previous chapter, this is a problem. And now you can see why. My test currently covers the ‘Version 1 QR codes are 21x21 modules large’-case, but the image I generate on line 27 already matches that case by accident<sup>17</sup>. This shows why tests that succeed immediately don’t actually test anything.

The easiest answer would be to create a new test that tests another version/size combination. But there is a better way, often used in Go testing: it is called a table-driven test.

Table-driven tests all follow the same pattern: first, they define a ‘table’ where each row describes the input and the expected output of a specific case. Then the test iterates over those rows, applying the unit under test on the input and comparing the result with the expected output:

`qrcoded_test.go`

---

```

40 func TestVersionDeterminesSize(t *testing.T) {
41     table := []struct {
42         version int
43         expected int
44     }{
45         {1, 21},
46         {2, 25},
47         {6, 41},
48         {7, 45},
49         {14, 73},
50         {40, 177},
51     }
52
53     for _, test := range table {
54         buffer := new(bytes.Buffer)
55         GenerateQRCode(buffer, "555-2368", Version(test.version))
56         img, _ := png.Decode(buffer)
57         if width := img.Bounds().Dx(); width != test.expected {
58             t.Errorf("Version %2d, expected %3d but got %3d",
59                 test.version, test.expected, width)
60         }
61     }
62 }

```

---

#### 41–51

This multi-line statement creates the table; it is an initializer expression, where the type is an anonymous struct. Each struct contains two fields: the version and the expected size. Lines

---

<sup>17</sup>Admittedly, a carefully prepared accident.

45–50 define a number of testcases. I *could* have enumerated all possible versions and sizes, but in order to save space<sup>18</sup> I’ve used a sample. Note how I have explicitly included the *boundary* values 1 and 40.

53–61

This block iterates over the table, executing the test I created earlier for each row.

58–59

Table-driven tests can cover a lot of cases, so you make your life a lot easier if your error messages are as specific as possible.

This time `go test` finally fails.

## Green

A nice thing about table-driven tests is that they allow you to see additional structure over your input and output. In this case, it’s quite obvious that the number of modules can be given by the function  $f(x) = 4x + 17$ . This makes the initial solution quite straightforward:

`qrcoded.go`

---

```

26 func GenerateQRCode(w io.Writer, code string, version Version) error {
27     size := 4*int(version) + 17
28     img := image.NewRGBA(image.Rect(0, 0, size, size))
29     return png.Encode(w, img)
30 }
```

---

This is enough to make the tests run, but it is not entirely satisfactory...

## Refactor

The `TestVersionDeterminesSize` test function covers the entire `GenerateQRCode` function; however, as its name suggests it only actually *checks* the size calculation. It feels as if the test does too much, and this is usually an indicator that the unit under test does too much as well.

In order to *focus* the test, the first step is to extract the size calculation into a separate function:

---

<sup>18</sup>And because I’m lazy.



## extracted size calculation

---

```
func DeriveSizeFromVersion(version Version) int {
    return 4*int(version) + 17
}
```

---

The name of this function already gives away the next step: why not make this a *method* of the Version type?

## qrcoded.go

---

```
26 func GenerateQRCode(w io.Writer, code string, version Version) error {
27     size := version.PatternSize()
28     img := image.NewRGBA(image.Rect(0, 0, size, size))
29     return png.Encode(w, img)
30 }
31
32 type Version int8
33
34 func (v Version) PatternSize() int {
35     return 4*int(v) + 17
36 }
```

---

34 Go allows you to add methods to any type you have defined in the current package, even if it's an alias for a basic type. I've named the method `PatternSize` instead of `Size` to clarify the intent of this function.

27 I have now removed the explicit size calculation, and call `version.PatternSize()` directly.

This is a good moment to use `go test` to verify that everything still works as it should. Notice how the code has become much better: the `GenerateQRCode` function no longer needs to know that `Version` can be cast to an `int` – it just asks the version for its size.

Now that I've extracted the size calculation from the `GenerateQRCode` function, it becomes possible to focus the test:

**qrcoded\_test.go**

---

```
53 for _, test := range table {  
54     size := Version(test.version).PatternSize()  
55     if size != test.expected {  
56         t.Errorf("Version %2d, expected %3d but got %3d",  
57             test.version, test.expected, size)  
58     }  
59 }
```

---

This test no longer references `GenerateQRCode`, it does not know about images, and it does not know about PNGs. Instead, it does exactly what its name suggests: testing that you can determine the pattern size from the function.

You might notice that our newly focused test no longer tests that `GenerateQRCode` actually interacts with the version to determine the image size. This is correct for two reasons: first of all, the image size is not derived from just the version; it is also derived from the number of pixels per module, and the size of the so called *quiet zone*, a formally defined padding around the pattern. In other words, checking the image size was wrong to begin with.

The second reason is more personal: in my opinion it is overkill to test that such trivial interactions occurred. This opinion is not shared by every proponent of test-driven development, so you should decide for yourself what you prefer.

If I were to test this interaction, this is how I would do it. First of all, I would turn `Version` into an interface, so I could create a `MockVersion` in my test. This `MockVersion` would then contain additional methods to check if the `Size` method was actually called. All in all, a lot of code for a trivial interaction.

## Wrapping up

In this chapter I've shown you a high-level overview of the world of QR Codes. I have used this overview to introduce the domain concept of versions and I have introduced you to table-driven testing, a common idiom in Go.

I have shown how test-driven development can help you identify code that does too much, and how the refactor step can help you in separation of concerns.

In the next chapter I will show how creating packages can help you even more in achieving modular, testable code.