

Summary Report
Art of Readable Code
Chapter 04

Why do Aesthetics Matter?

- Obviously it's easier to work with code that's aesthetically pleasing. If you think about it, most of your time programming is spent looking at code! The faster you can skim through your code, the easier it is for everyone to use it.
 - **Rearrange Line Breaks to Be Consistent and Compact**
 - Use Methods to Clean Up Irregularity
 - Even though our goal was just to make the code more aesthetically pleasing, this change has a number of other side benefits:
 - It eliminates a lot of the duplicated code from before, making the code more compact.
 - The important parts of each test case (the names and error strings) are now by themselves, in plain sight.
 - Adding new tests should be much easier now.
 - The moral of the story is that making code “look pretty” often results in more than just surface improvements—it might help you structure your code better.
- **Use Column Alignment When Helpful**
 - Straight edges and columns make it easier for readers to scan through text.
 - Sometimes you can introduce “column alignment” to make the code easier to read.
 - **Should You Use Column Alignment?**
 - Column edges provide “visual handrails” that make it easier to scan through. It's a good example of “make similar code look similar.”
 - But some programmers don't like it. One reason is that it takes more work to set up and maintain the alignment. Another reason is it creates a larger “diff” when making changes—a one-line change might cause five other lines to change (mostly just whitespace).
- **Pick a Meaningful Order, and Use It Consistently**
 - Order them from “most important” to “least important.”
 - Order them alphabetically.
- **Organize Declarations into Blocks**

- The brain naturally thinks in terms of groups and hierarchies, so you can help a reader quickly digest your code by organizing it that way.
- The reason is that you can quickly figure out the four high-level sections and then read the details of each section when it's necessary.
- **Break Code into “Paragraphs”**
 - It's a way to group similar ideas together and set them apart from other ideas.
 - It provides a visual “stepping stone”—without it, it's easy to lose your place on the page.
 - It facilitates navigation from one paragraph to another.
- **Personal Style versus Consistency**
 - **Consistent style is more important than the “right” style.**

Summary

- Everyone prefers to read code that's aesthetically pleasing. By “formatting” your code in a consistent, meaningful way, you make it easier and faster to read.
- Here are specific techniques we discussed:
- If multiple blocks of code are doing similar things, try to give them the same silhouette.
- Aligning parts of the code into “columns” can make code easy to skim through.
- If code mentions A, B, and C in one place, don't say B, C, and A in another. Pick a meaningful order and stick with it.
- Use empty lines to break apart large blocks into logical “paragraphs.”

