



Personal Blog of Rob Muhlestein (rwxrob)

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Hello friend. Welcome. Here you'll find my random ranting about nothing and everything. Some ideas start here and end somewhere else. Mostly I write for me but might as well share it.

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Copyright

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Pumping up Perl

Friday, January 3, 2025, 12:48:44PM EST

"Perl is, by and large, a digested and simplified version of Unix. Perl is the Cliff Notes of Unix. I could never really get myself to learn sed, awk, zsh, grep, find, m4, pipes, xargs, tee, cut, paste, yacc, lex, various IPC or even C for that matter. I ought to. In practice, in almost all cases I use perl." - Larry Wall

I keep coming back to Perl.[1] There is nothing better than Perl for text processing, period. It destroys all the things it targets—especially awk. People who argue that awk is universal have to accept that it cannot do most of the things people doing text processing want to do from their local workstations doing whatever.

Better to create a perl filter than a Vim plugin

Keeping everything in a Unix self-contained filter script—even if just one line—is *always* better than a Vim plugin that does nothing more than transform content. This way these things can be chained together. You just cannot do that with filters.

References

[1] R. S. Muhlestein, “Why are you still using Perl?,” [rwxrob.github.io](https://rwxrob.github.io/faq#_why_are_you_still_using_perl). [Online]. Available: https://rwxrob.github.io/faq#_why_are_you_still_using_perl. [Accessed: Jan. 3, 2025].

Banishing bash for scripting

Friday, January 3, 2025, 12:25:20PM EST

Bash has burned me one too many times in 2024—mostly its horrible regular expression syntax or just not being on a system that I regularly use.

It's not as ubiquitous as people say

I know, right? Here I have been saying bash is everywhere. It's not. Container images that I love notably do not have it installed at all (Alpine, BusyBox, Kali, Arch) plus I have been doing a lot more with BSD and, well, bash is just not there without installing it. This has made it problematic when I wanted to just copy over my bashrc file. Nope. Can't do it.

I'll never willingly use GPLv3 stuff for anything

Perhaps the single biggest reason I do not want to use it ever again for scripting is the license. I despise GPLv3 and the people who push it. Most of them have no idea why it is so monstrously horrible for the OpenSource ecosystem and goes *against* all the founding principles of FOSS by *forcing* hardware manufacturers to comply with their Menshevik-esque ideas of "freedom". You are free so long as you comply with their idea of what "freedom" actually means. It's downright unethical and definitely untenable. This is why Linus has actively campaigned against it and refused to move the Linux kernel to it.[1] I personally will not willingly use anything that is GPLv3 if I can help it, and bash is one of those things.

Whatever interactive shell is fine

I'll use whatever interactive shell is on the host system from now on and will be converting my bashrc to a universal shell only so that I can just rename it. Any shell that I want has all the stuff I need.

What about completion?

It's a pain point for sure. Only bash supports self-completion. Zsh has to be modified with a couple scripts to make completion work with `complete -C foo foo` syntax. To me it's worth it even if all the other failures of zsh are something I cannot avoid.

Other reasons

Summary of other reasons I'm too lazy to write about right now:

- POSIX shell works *everywhere*
- Not as flexible or ubiquitous as POSIX
- Safer than POSIX but not as safe as `perl -T`
- Bloated with completely unnecessary stuff (100x > perl)

- `-r-xr-xr-x 1 root wheel 1.2M Aug 4 06:31 /bin/bash`
- `-rwxr-xr-x 1 root wheel 134K Aug 4 06:31 /usr/bin/perl`
- Sloooow, really slow (one reason `dash` was invented)
- Only integer math support
- Dependence on other external tools for text processing
- Bashisms aren't really that great
- Extended regular expressions are absolutely grotesque
- Using `/bin/sh` is `/bin/bash` on some systems but POSIX limited

References

[1] Open Source Stack Exchange, "What exactly is Tivoization and why didn't Linus Torvalds like it in GPLv3?," Open Source Stack Exchange. [Online]. Available: <https://opensource.stackexchange.com/questions/259/what-exactly-is-tivoization-and-why-didnt-linus-torvalds-like-it-in-gplv3>. [Accessed: Jan. 3, 2025].

AI or die

Friday, January 3, 2025, 12:52:05PM EST

For 10 years I used some form of Zettelkasten or knowledge base instead of a blog but since the advent of AI and large language models (LLMs) writing anything that isn't narrative prose is just stupid.

An AI assistant can find answers faster than any search I could ever do before.

These things favor stories, articles, and blogs over random note-taking and are sourced from the Internet.

Very few people will realize why this matters. Most of mediocrity will continue to chase the pointless trends and play with idiotic wastes of time like Obsidian and other flashy note-taking systems rather than incorporating AI into their workflows to get *actual* knowledge work done. Not me. While they are making 40 minute videos about how to get Excalidraw to render from your highly specific note taking with a stupid Lua plugin I will use by time for other things:

- Ongoing learning and research in real-time, anytime
- Interactive language instruction in Russian and French
- Automatic bibliographic reference creation down to the page number
- Automated YouTube descriptions and chapter markers derived from transcripts
- Full bike trip planning *while moving on the bike*
- Early medical issue diagnosis and training plans
- Breaking writers block for anything I'd ever write
- Perfect grammar and punctuation evaluation of my writing
- Automatic code comment generation from the code itself
- Mundane code creation

All I can say to the many skeptics out there is *try it*. Get ChatGPT and begin using it for stuff for which you would use Google search. Then, increase that, have it make you a plan for the day. Ask it what to eat for the next meal based on your day and current fitness goals. Show it your favorite painting and ask it to comment on it and provide resources. This isn't the kind of thing you will believe until it happens to you.

Plans for 2025

Wednesday, January 1, 2025, 12:02:14PM EST

Here we are in a new year. I'm a sucker for setting goals and reviewing them after the fact. Sipping coffee and eating a waffle with my wife while she writes in her shiny new 2025 journal. Sam is lounging on the patio in the sun. Seems like 2025 is going to be a great year.

- YouTube update videos
- Finish book: *Terminal Velocity*
- Finish book: *Coding from the Get Go*
- Books now available in PDF and EPUB automatically
- Son's college graduation in Idaho
- Son's stay with us in apartment
- Reward readers over viewers
- IRC (Twitch chat) all day
- Customize and improve cloudbot
- What about discord?

Mode plans:

- SCREEN: Highest percentage of content
- BIKE: Daily cycling at sunset
- COWORKING: Rebuilding Kubernetes cluster
- COWORKING: Automating Vault secrets extraction from K8SAPPs
- COWORKING: Perl over bash for small scripts
- COWORKING: Perl to Go migrations
- COWORKING: Cleaning up dot files

Time budget

Eating	10
Hygiene	7
Bike (BIKE)	14
Work (COWORKING)	32
Sleep	56
Cleaning (IRL)	7
Writing (SCREEN)	14
Homelab/Coding	8

Yoga/Meditation	4
Strength	2
Chill/Doris	14