

# Thoughts about Google's Go Programming Language

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Historically, we can distinguish really big software companies for providing, at least, four major kinds of products: an operating system (sometimes open sourced at a certain level), a web browser (with various degrees of standard compliance), a suite of office applications (slightly compatible with everyone else's), and a programming language with curly brackets (generally incompatible with everything else). In that particular order, we have:

- **Microsoft:** Windows, Internet Explorer, Microsoft Office, and C#.
- **Sun:** Solaris, HotJava (sic), StarOffice, and Java.
- **Apple:** Mac OS X, Safari, iWork, and Objective-C.
- **Google:** Chrome OS, Chrome, Google Docs, and... Go.

Precisely, Go was the last piece that Google had to create in order to fit into the framework above. And it did, with a bright team including Ken Thompson (of Unix and C fame) and Rob Pike (of Plan 9 and UTF-8 fame). With names like that, and with Google's own funding and infrastructure, it is normal that the media went into a hype frenzy yesterday.

I think, however, that Google's engineers got tired of what the current and upcoming versions of their "official" programming languages (Java 7, C++0x and Python 3.0) had to offer, and simply came up with a programming language that fits better their needs and expectations. As one of the slides of the TechTalk says, with current languages "You can be productive or safe, not both."

Features like built-in support for concurrency or garbage collection hide the real true feature behind the language: faster build times with static typing support. This is important for Google from a software economy point of view: they want more productivity from their developers, or, in other words, more bang for their buck, all together with verifiable quality and speed of execution. Go seems to be designed to deliver in these areas. However, Rob Pike is careful to say that the language is experimental, so time will tell if their efforts were worth it.

In any case, it is worth noting that there was a previous programming language called Go! (whose author even wrote a book about it), and after an InformationWeek article revealed this, a petition has started in the Go bug tracking,

asking Google to change the name of the language, all in the name of Google's own "Don't be evil" motto.