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The Easy Way to Open Source by Ewan Fisher

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There has been a revolution in home electronics in recent years, not least because of the increasing sophistication of open source technology. Open source is a production and development environment that aims to give access to the technology underlying internet and electronic devices.

Along with the increasingly high quality of electronic components that are readily available on the open market, the open source development model has made it much easier for hobbyists and enthusiasts to develop their own software and hardware. The number of people developing their own devices at home is growing rapidly, whether they are keen amateurs wanting to learn more about electronics, or trained engineers working to develop their own prototypes for products that might one day have commercial applications.

For these enthusiasts, the availability of open source technology has been a huge catalyst to invention and creativity, and they have made the process of learning about or developing new equipment far easier.

A look at some of the electronics components available from the growing number of online suppliers quickly reveals the sophistication and simplicity of the boards that you can buy. Take, for example, the Fez Panda. Behind the cute name lies a .NET micro framework that allows users to program and debug using Microsoftâ€™s free Visual C# Express. It allows applications to be loaded via a USB cable with full featured debugging capabilities, such as stepping in code or inspecting variables.

For the experienced electronics enthusiast all of that terminology will make perfect sense, but for the beginner it may sound complex. Nevertheless, if you are just starting to learn about this kind of technology, then there is an easy way to build on your knowledge - a Fez Ultimate Kit - which is also a good way for the more knowledgeable enthusiast to build on the capability of this innovative board.

The Fez Panda, or equally the FEZ Domino, lies at the heart of this kit, which includes an infra-red receiver, an IRLED transmitter, a light sensor, a thermometer, a speaker, a variable resistor and much more. The kit is a perfect choice for anyone with no experience in hardware whatsoever, and provides internet connectivity to Fez Panda.

The kit consists of e-blocks that are easy to assemble for plug-and-play functionality, so you can get access to inputs and sensor data in a matter of minutes. Assemble the components and connect to an internet service to store and request data and this neat piece of kit opens up endless possibilities.

You could use it to automate your home as a controller for all the gadgets you have wired up or you could use it to allow your mobile phone to act as a remote control for your television. All of this and much more is easy to understand with the â€œInternet of Thingsâ€• eBook, which comes with the kit. As well as giving you some cool applications for the technology, it will help you to learn a host of things about home electronics.

If the book is not enough, then you can always call on the expert knowledge of the online suppliers selling these kits. Often they are electronics enthusiasts, too, with a wealth of experience, and they will be happy to answer any queries you have, either about which products to buy or how to use them.

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Ewan Fisher - About Author:
Proto-PIC is the best source for electronics enthusiasts who look out for UK electronic components like a Fez panda to showcase their creative talent.

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