

"...the right combination of funny and thought-provoking content, philosophy and practical advice."

Gojko Adzic, Author, "Fifty Quick Ideas To Improve Your Tests"

Dear

Evil



Tester

**PROVOCATIVE ADVICE
THAT COULD CHANGE
YOUR APPROACH TO
TESTING FOREVER**

Alan Richardson

"Dear Evil Tester"

Alan Richardson

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Leanpub

This is a [Leanpub](#) book. Leanpub empowers authors and publishers with the Lean Publishing process. [Lean Publishing](#) is the act of publishing an in-progress ebook using lightweight tools and many iterations to get reader feedback, pivot until you have the right book and build traction once you do.

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Also By Alan Richardson

Java For Testers

“Wonderful stuff there. Real deep.”

Rob Sabourin, @RobertASabourin
Author of “I Am a Bug”

“The more you know about software testing, the more you will find to amuse you.”

Dot Graham, @dorothygraham
Author of “Experiences of Test Automation”

“laugh-out-loud episodes”

Paul Gerrard, @paul_gerrard
Author of “The Tester’s Pocketbook”

“A great read for every Tester.”

Andy Glover, @cartoontester
Author of “Cartoon Tester”

“Dad, what’s a testimonial?”

Keeran Richardson, Age 11

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What people are saying

Dot Graham, Author of “Experiences of Test Automation”, [@dorothygraham](#)¹

A lot of testing books are (rightly) very serious reads. If you want something completely different, read the “Evil Tester”’s take on the absurdities of our craft. The more you know about software testing, the more you will find to amuse you.

Andy Glover, Author of “Cartoon Tester”, [@cartoon-tester](#)²

The Evil Tester is not so evil after all. In his book he encourages us to accept uncertainty and doubt in software development and provides the freedom to ask questions. And what fantastic questions and answers, nothing is held back! A great read for every Tester.

Rob Lambert, Author of “Remaining Relevant”, [@rob_lambert](#)³

¹<https://twitter.com/dorothygraham>

²<https://twitter.com/cartoontester>

³https://twitter.com/rob_lambert

Read it and loved it. Great book. It's funny but there's also the essays to balance it out. I really enjoyed it."

James Lyndsay, workroom-productions.com, [@workroomprds](https://twitter.com/workroomprds)⁴

Behind EvilTester's grumpy facade lies a heart of stone. Rash sentiment never holds back his glittering, steely mind. Funny guy, though.

Rob Sabourin, Author of "I Am a Bug", [@RobertASabourin](https://twitter.com/RobertASabourin)⁵

I read "Dear Evil Tester". I loved it. Indeed I couldn't put it down. I hope "Dear Evil Tester" comes out in a print edition so I can put it down properly. (how do you put down a pdf really?)

I laughed - then I cried - then I laughed harder - then I cried softer.

My favorite advice was to a tester inquiring as to how to get involved in the requirement part of a project - earlier is better right? - and the Evil Tester demonstrated shrewd platonic style by asking what if the tester succeeded - how would he make a difference? Convince

⁴<https://twitter.com/workroomprds>

⁵<https://twitter.com/RobertASabourin>

me you would make a difference! Wonderful stuff there. Real deep.

**Gojko Adzic, Author of “Specification by Example”,
[@gojkoadzic](#)⁶**

Alan is one of the smartest people in the testing community and his new book, even if written as an alter ego, is full of inspirational gems. The Evil Tester pulls off the right combination of funny and thought-provoking content, philosophy and practical advice. Between learning about the effect of Epimenides paradox on Pinocchio’s nose and eunuch testing, there are true gems about improving collaboration between developers and testers and career advice for people starting in this industry.

**Paul Gerrard, Author of “The Tester’s Pocketbook”,
[@paul_gerrard](#)⁷**

Needless to say, I like it a lot. For a testing book (if that’s what you call it) to have laugh-out-loud episodes (and not because its recommendations are risible) is rather unusual. I think it is mistitled, however. You should call it

⁶<https://twitter.com/gojkoadzic>

⁷https://twitter.com/paul_gerrard

Gonzo Testing. The similarity to the writings of Hunter S. Thompson are there for all to see. So like HST. Except for the swearing. And the drugs. And the alcohol. And the violence. And the paranoia. And the suicidal tendencies. But other than that...

Huib Schoots, huibschool.nl, [@huibschoots](https://twitter.com/huibschoots)⁸

Dear Evil Tester is by far the funniest book on testing I have ever read. I couldn't get the smile of my face and I found myself laughing out loud quite some times. Alan writes with a dark humour that I like a lot! And unlike other testing books, Dear Evil Tester deals with serious testing problems in a funny way but manages to answer the questions asked by readers. A must read for every tester or anyone in the software development industry!

Richard Bradshaw, thefriendlytester.co.uk, [@FriendlyTester](https://twitter.com/FriendlyTester)⁹

“A delightfully engaging read. Alan calls on his vast experience to deliver insightful and practical advice wrapped up in a warm dark blanket of humour and wit.”

⁸<https://twitter.com/huibschoots>

⁹<https://twitter.com/FriendlyTester>

Introduction

One of the great opportunities I had when contributing to “The Testing Planet”, was answering people’s letters, or in this case ‘Questions’. We created a “Dear Evil Tester” column, an obvious rip-off of the Agony Aunt columns that have existed in newspapers for a bazillion years.

I haven’t added these to the book in chronological order, I’ve added them in the order that I think either motivates the reader most, or for comic effect, or I just pasted them in randomly. Whichever explanation works for you is undoubtedly the correct one. If it looks like genius, then I meant it.

In fact the very first one, I made up. Apparently this is common practice in the newspaper industry, but I did it to kickstart the process. You might even be able to tell which letter it is. I know which one it is, but I’m not telling. All the other letters were ‘real’.

I had no idea if the people on the receiving end of my advice were serious in their questioning, or if they were contributing to the global joke that was “Dear Evil Tester”. Frankly, I didn’t care. I always planned to take their question seriously and produced a serious answer injected with all the humour, scorn, and cynicism I could muster. Additionally, lacing the answer with the ‘I wish someone

had told me this when I was younger' attitude that I wanted out there in the testing community.

A Book of Three Halves

This is a book of two halves, and an extra bit. The first section contains the 'published' letters and answers. This is a nice, fun, gentle introduction to the world of the Evil Tester.

The second half is darker, harder, at times intensely practical, but still edgy advice. The kind of advice you don't receive anywhere else, possibly for good reason.

And then we finish with some essays which summarise the attitudes and approaches evidenced in the letter answers.

So prepare yourself. If you are just here for a good time, then forget it, you're going to learn stuff as well and be pushed to think about what you do.

On Publishing

I was somewhat reticent in publishing this. After all "Evil Tester" is a persona, not me, and while sometimes I channel him to make a point, or to rail at the world, he doesn't represent my normal communication approach.

Frankly I was worried that some people would never speak to me again. I've forgotten who most of the people submitting questions were, if I ever knew, but I'm sure I recognise some of them. And some of them I hope will speak to me again.

Also, I'm not sure how the world of work will react to this, some people might never employ me after reading this. But then, some people will never employ me anyway.

And I'm sure you, dear reader, don't care about my employment prospects. After all, when one writes a book one instantly becomes rich and famous.

Also, you may not have even paid for this book, you might have ripped it off some torrent or something (if you did and they embedded a virus in the middle then don't blame me). If you did pay for it, then thank you. I do hope it entertains you, perhaps you'd consider employing me as a consultant as well?

And I know some of you don't care about my employment prospects given the advice I received from some of you:

- “You should swear more”
 - I'm pretty sure I don't swear at all in here. After all, we are gentlefolk. And if it's in the dictionary, I'm pretty sure that doesn't count as swearing. And worry not for I don't even use those words, so all the little children here, you can read this text without any fear.
- “You should write more strongly”
 - While touchtyping does make my fingers stronger, I'm not prepared to bench press solely using them. I think that is why God invented arms. That, and to make it easier to peel bananas.
- “You should name and shame”

- I put my name on the cover. Oh, the shame I feel.
- “Make a stand. Take a single position.”
 - The only principle I’m prepared to absolutely commit to, with absolute certainty, is that I can change my mind.
- “Add more facts”
 - If I add a fact in here, people might think it is made up. Then where would they be. They’d start believing made up facts and figures thinking they were real because they read it in black and white in a book and books deal with facts don’t they. If you don’t believe me read Robert Anton Wilson’s Illuminatus books, then try and work out what is fact and what is fiction.

And frankly some of you are my competitors. We work in the same industry. We do similar things. And if I become unemployable then that works in your favour. I’m not going to be cynical and attribute this motivation to everyone that encouraged me. Of course I can think of someone who did, and might have, but... I’m sure they didn’t, well, I’m mostly sure.

On Formatting

Some of you may notice that your name, no longer has its special characters in it. Yup, that was me. I took them out. Sorry. I didn’t fancy maintaining anything except ZX81 alpha chars. Feel free to write to someone else and complain.

When I started writing this book I originally formatted the ‘letters’ as:

Dear Evil Tester,
blah blah blah
from,
Someone

But, honestly, that seemed like padding. So I’ve done the decent thing and removed most of the formatting so now they look like this:



blah blah blah, blah de blah blah, blah de
blah de blah, blah, de blah de blah blah?

Someone very special

Then my answer in here.



Periodically there might even be a commentary

If I do write a commentary, then it will look like this.

It may not read like a letter, but at least you can take the consolation to heart that I don't want to rip you off with an inflated page count.

Nope, no padding in here. Every word I write has value. I don't just put text in here to up the word count and increase the number of pages so that you believe you have a bigger bundle of pages than you actually do. I would not do that to you. Take me at my word that I consider your decision to purchase this book as incredibly important to me and I would do nothing that might damage that trust between us, so you will not find any artificial padding in here.

Nope, none.

Nada, never ever.

That's right, not... ever.

Enjoy.



Slogans! Slogans! We don't need no stinkin' slogans

You might even see slogans. These are designed to motivate, provoke, make you laugh, make you cry. Actually most of these Eviltesterisms are generated randomly by “The Eviltestersloganiser” (and yes, that is me too).



Acknowledgements

I am grateful to everyone that submitted questions. I'd mention you all by name but we anonymized you for publication and review. After all, it's an agony aunt column. You bared your soul to the world, and I mocked you for it.

Thank you all. I'm sure I could have made up questions, but they would not have provided the ring of truth that your true life painful experiences did.

Also thanks to the folks involved in the publication of some of these answers in the Testing Planet.

Those of you I know were involved by name:

- Rob Lambert
 - Rob was the first editor of the Testing Planet who introduced “Dear Evil Tester” as a regular feature and promoted it so well that we had ‘real’ reader’s questions. A miracle. Thanks for laughing at my early drafts and tightening up the writing. I used my drafts in this book to avoid your heavy handed censorship and more professionally edited and tightly written prose.
- Rosie Sherry
 - Rosie took the risk of publishing this nonsense in the paper. I have no idea of the critical

reception because she shielded me from such fame and fortune. Thanks also for creating the Politically Correct iconography for Evil Tester rather than my crudely scribbled drawing. I have used my scribbles in this book to add an authentic homespun charm to the proceedings, and to avoid any licensing fees.

- Simon Knight
 - Simon for carrying on Rob’s torch, excellent editing, and gathering many more questions for the answering.

And I’m sure there were other Testing Planet people involved. You all did a great job.

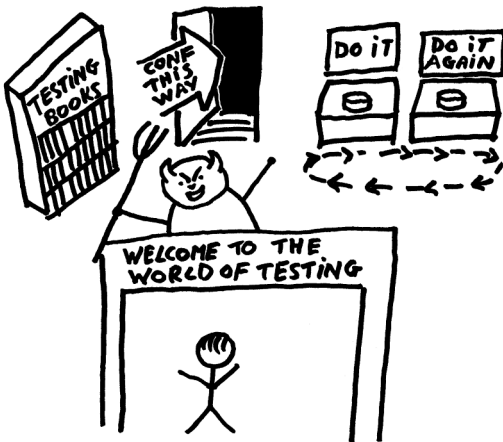
Thank you to the reviewers who provided comments that I fed into the editing process, and who also kindly provided testimonial blurbs that I could butcher for promotional purposes: Gojko Adzic, Richard Bradshaw, Paul Gerrard, Andy Glover, Dorothy Graham, Rob Lambert, James Lyndsay, Rob Sabourin, Huib Schoots.

Any remaining errors are mine, and either intentional, or due to my poor grammar skills. You can decide. And remember, I do so enjoy starting sentences with a conjunction. And writing partial sentences¹⁰. Stop reading now if you can’t handle it.

¹⁰I’d love to claim that this style was deliberate and influenced by my study of pulp novels from the 30’s and 40’s, but I suspect it stems from my inability to read my English teacher’s handwritten comments on my school homework.

Thanks also to my family: Billie and Keeran, for putting up with my answers to their questions. The quality of the answers you read here is representative of the quality of answers they receive at home. Just imagine how badly my answers impact my son's homework.

And thanks to you, dear reader, for joining us.



Welcome to the World of "Dear Evil Tester"

You can still ask me anything

If you have any questions you would like to see in a future volume then please let me know:

- www.eviltester.com/askmeanything¹¹



¹¹<http://www.eviltester.com/askmeanything>

The “Dear Evil Tester” Letters

The hardest part of coming up with the answers was what to sign off as.

Should it be E, or Uncle E, or Auntie Evil, etc. etc.

You can see the range of titles I used.

If you have a favourite then feel free to adopt it as your email signature, I won't charge you.



**Of course I'm not Evil...
Do I look Evil?**

Are you truly evil?



Are you truly evil or just misunderstood?

Vernon

Dear Vernon,

Probably neither.

In an attempt to make this section more interactive I offer you more options.

Could it be:

1. I’m deliberately engaging in false advertising for shock effect.
2. I can’t spell. I meant to write “live” tester, incorrectly wrote it as “vile” tester and hastily corrected it to “evil” tester. And now I have to live with this vile tag forever. Poor poor pitiful me.
3. I got drunk and, well... you know how it goes.
4. *insert your plausible answer here*

E.

When is testing not required?



When can a person say that testing is not required for a particular product ?

Yogesh

Hi Yogesh,

I like questions with flippant answers. So, of course the answer is “Whenever they want”. They can equally say “Bibble Bibble” whenever they want.

But I suspect you want a less flippant and more scientific answer (Bwahaha).

My first Google search for “% of IT projects that fail” provided me with a scientific range of “62 - 68”%. I will make this complicated statistic easy for my readers by conclusively stating that 70% of IT projects fail.

Therefore, I can conclude that 100% of people on 70% of IT projects can say “Testing is not required for this particular product” and they can hold their heads up high in the hope that the project was doomed anyway. Pretty good odds.

Consequently we only have to concern ourselves with the 100% of people involved in 30% of IT projects.

We all know that “you can’t test quality into a product” therefore I can use this to conclude that the product will

either be quality or it won't, so we can't use 'quality' as a justification for testing.

So basing my judgement on the preceding science; I can say: if a person has the power to cause the project to fail, then they can say “testing is not required”, at the point they make the decision to doom the project.

Making rocket science look easy,

Uncle E.



Are you a good little tester?

Don't patronize me, I'm not a good little tester!

I'm better than that. I'm Eevil.

Why are you evil?



Why are you evil?

George

Hi George,

Thanks for asking. Its not often people ask that. Actually they do. And I give lots of answers. So here is one. Ask again and you might get another.

Testers very often don't think that they can go beyond the norms.

They think they need permission.

The point is we don't need permission.

We should do whatever it takes.

We should be using the system as a system. We should manipulate it.

It is one of the few things that we can manipulate without consequence, without worrying about its feelings. We can do whatever we want to it. We can act however we need to, to fulfil our part in the project.

We have to do things to the system that no-one else will do.

Things that no one else is *prepared* to do.

Things that no-one else can even conceptualise that it is something that you would ever want to do.

I use the term “Evil”, to give me the freedom and flexibility to do that.

Hope that helps,

Cap’n E of the Good Ship ‘vil

PS. Do whatever it takes.

PPS. You can tell your boss I said so.



OK, so I cheated.

“What so early in the book?”

Yup, that’s what testers try to do. We cheat.
Get over it.

I was asked this question after a keynote session in Poland at “Agile Testing and Automation”.

But I liked the answer and wanted to share it with you.

How do you deal with a developer with attitude?



How must a tester deal with a developer, especially when the developer carries the attitude that he is always right?

Baz

Hi Baz,

I have similar problems. Since I too am always right I occasionally butt heads with a misguided developer who thinks that they are more right than me.

If you are 100% sure that they are not right, and have evidence, then let the evidence speak for itself. Of course the evidence may have to speak to the developer’s manager since the developer can always block out the evidence through clever selective listening.

Sometimes I find it useful to compromise. Let them win half the argument, wait till they’ve fixed half of what you want. Then start up the argument later and fight for the second half.

Sometimes I listen to the developer, and sometimes when I do that I find myself being influenced by their argument, because sometimes they are not wrong. (I hate it when this happens.)

I’ve always liked these words “[The Gestalt Prayer¹²](#)” by Fritz Perls from “Gestalt Therapy Verbatim” and when I remember them, they help me.

I do my thing and you do your thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations,
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.
You are you, and I am I,
and if by chance we find each other, it’s beautiful.
If not, it can’t be helped.

Hope that helps,

Team Dynamics Therapist Evil



¹²https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt_prayer

About The Author

Alan Richardson is a test consultant. He tests things, and helps people test better. **He is not Evil.**

Alan helps people improve their ability to automate - primarily with Java, but has also worked with Ruby and .Net. He also helps teams improve their ability to test within an Agile environment, make their exploratory testing more effective and test to more technical levels.

Alan blogs at EvilTester.com¹³, here he mainly writes practical articles on technical and exploratory testing.

Alan performs keynotes and tutorials at conferences worldwide. You can find his presentations and papers on his consultancy web site at CompendiumDev.co.uk¹⁴.

Alan also offers [online training](#)¹⁵. And at the time of writing has on-line training courses for learning:

- [Selenium WebDriver API with Java](#)¹⁶
- [Technical Web Testing 101](#)¹⁷

¹³<http://eviltester.com>

¹⁴<http://compendiumdev.co.uk>

¹⁵http://www.compendiumdev.co.uk/page/online_training

¹⁶<http://compendiumdev.co.uk/page/seleniumwebdrivercourse>

¹⁷<http://compendiumdev.co.uk/page/techweb101course>

Alan wrote the book “[Java For Testers](#)¹⁸” which teaches Java programming from the perspective of writing @Test methods rather than applications. This provides the basic programming knowledge required to write code to automate the execution of other applications.

Alan maintains the [SeleniumSimplified.com](#)¹⁹ website which has articles and tutorials on using Selenium WebDriver.

Alan also wrote the book “[Selenium Simplified](#)²⁰” which taught basic programming skills and Selenium-RC.

Alan Richardson has over twenty years of professional IT experience: as a programmer, tester and test manager.

Alan works as an independent consultant, and he could be helping you right now.

You can contact Alan via his website:

- compendiumdev.co.uk/page/contact_us²¹

¹⁸<http://javafortesters.com>

¹⁹<http://seleniumsimplified.com/>

²⁰<http://www.compendiumdev.co.uk/selenium/>

²¹http://compendiumdev.co.uk/page/contact_us

What you could be reading

This sample is incomplete (for obvious reasons). But I think, for marketing purposes, that is important for you to get a taste on what the full contents contain.

That's right, this is what you could be reading when you head back to leanpub.com/DearEvilTester²² and click on the buy button:

Introduction

Acknowledgements

You can still ask me anything

The “Dear Evil Tester” Letters

Are you truly Evil?

When is testing not required?

Why are you Evil?

What is the most evil metric?

Any tips for a certification exam?

If all testing is exploratory,
am I no longer special?

How can I get involved at the
requirements stage?

Can I make a decent living as a tester?

²²<https://leanpub.com/DearEvilTester>

How do you deal with a developer
with attitude?

Pinnocchio's nose?

How do you deal with a tester
not pulling their weight?

Why is database testing painful?

Should I pretend to test?

Should developers do eunuch testing?

How do you prevent boredom?

How do you define concurrent users?

How do I gain the respect of developers?

My team only cares about defects,
what do I do?

Unpublished Questions

How to track exploratory testing?

What is exploratory testing?

Can anyone test?

What is Sanity Testing and
why should I care?

Can I measure programmer quality
using bug count?

What is a Program Test Manager?

Tell me about Ad-hoc

Who invented Liquid Soap?

Why do we have labels?

How do you invent?

Difference between a guru,
mentor and rxpert?

Is 'Test Automation' a waste of time?

Most common project failings?
Is retesting a subset of
 regression testing?
Which is the best test tool?
How to interest people in testing?
How do you test quality?
Oracle database did not respond?
What's in your Test Tool Utility Belt?
Why do we test?
Why are some testers called QA?
What are the new trends in testing?
How do you talk at conferences?
Can one be technical without
 knowing how to automate?

Essays

What is Testing?
Unconventional Influences
Slogans

Seriously, an Afterword

Recommended Reading and References

Recommended Reading For Software Testing
Non-Testing References
Pop Culture References
Unrelated Reading

About The Author

Remember, all it takes is a shopping trip to leanpub.com/DearEvilTester²³, and all this “Dear Evil Tester” goodness could be yours.

²³<https://leanpub.com/DearEvilTester>

What you could be reading

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Mwahahaha!