Tips for Self-Study

The easiest path for the self-study student is to follow the book's recommendations and sequence. Complete Algebra 1 and hone typing skills before getting started. Download Python 3.7 or higher from python.org to a computer running the Windows Operating System. Much of the material is sequential, so work through the book from start to finish.

Learning to program involves a degree of trial and error. Mistakes are an expected part of the learning process, thus, a critical task for a beginning programmer is debugging. Debugging is finding and correcting errors in the code. Sometimes the Python interpreter will provide a message to help find the error. Sometimes the program just runs oddly.

The book addresses common pitfalls and hints to help debug. However, sometimes an error is still hard to find. (It is not unheard of for a tired programmer to have an indentation error that is just plainly hard to see.) If the program is short, try retyping it. If it is long, run the program in stages. Run the first part, test it thoroughly, and debug. Add a little code to that, run, test, and debug, and so on. If too much time is spent on a particular error, walk away and come back to it with fresh eyes.

If the program is code you are generating for one of the Chapter Practices, consider a different logical flow. Read through Chapter 12 to help you with program design. Write out a new plan of attack in laymen's terms as pseudocode or visually with a flowchart. Then, try again. After making a valiant effort, there is no shame in checking the Chapter Practice solutions.

Links to video help to download Python and Chapter Practice solutions are provided here.