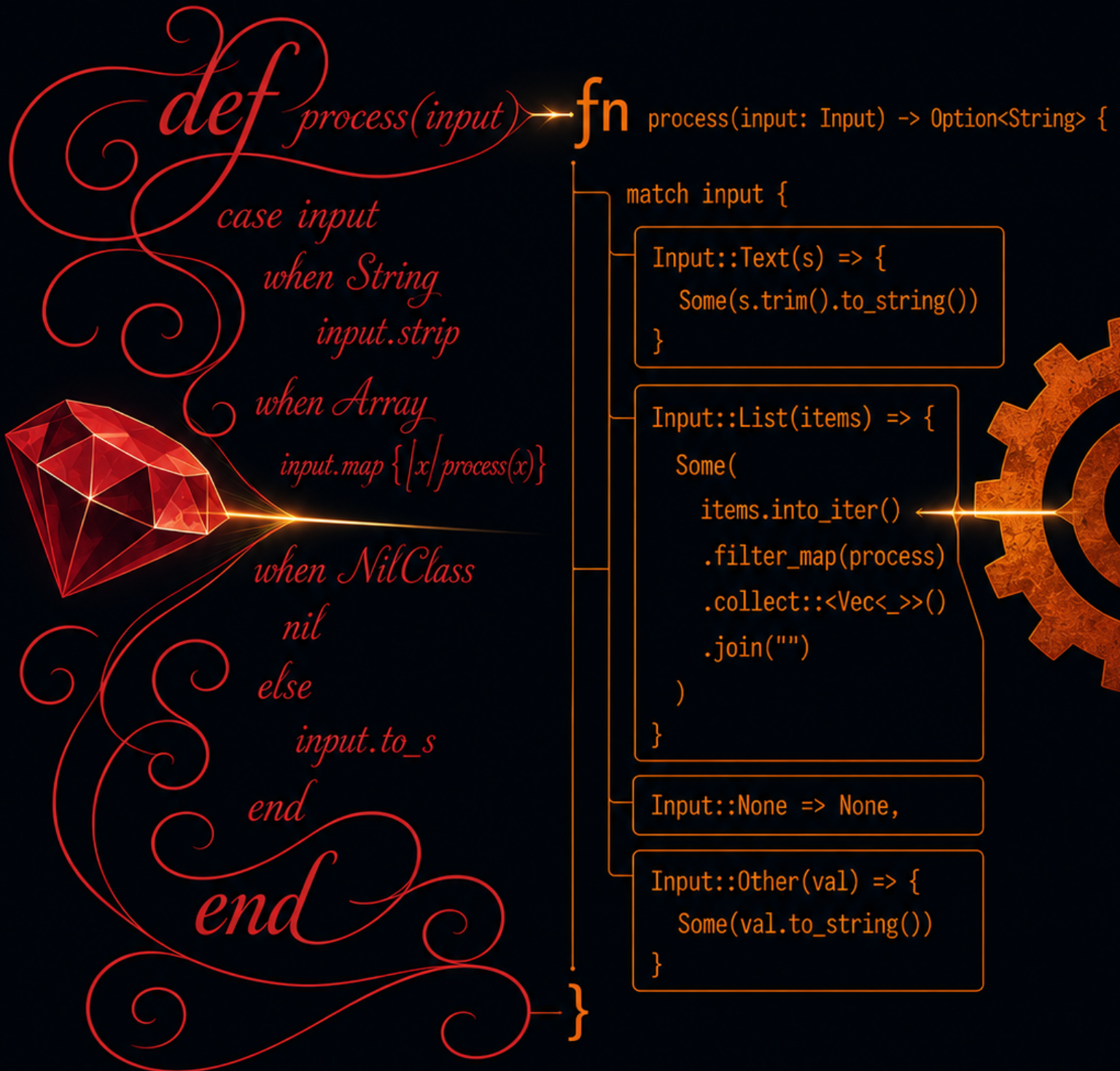


FROM RUBY TO RUST

A Ruby Programmer's Guide to Learning Rust



Joel Bryan Juliano

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This book is available at <https://leanpub.com/rb2rust>

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Preface

I started writing Ruby in 2010. For over a decade, it was my go-to language – the one I reached for when I needed to think through a problem, build a prototype, or ship a feature. Ruby’s slogan is “A Programmer’s Best Friend,” and I believe it.

In 2018, I added Go to my toolkit, and the Ruby-to-Go mappings I discovered became my first book. During the pandemic, stuck at home like everyone else, I started reading about Rust – its promise of memory safety without a garbage collector, its reputation for catching bugs at compile time, its streak as the most loved language on Stack Overflow. I was hooked before I wrote a single line. I started taking notes. Those notes became a folder. That folder sat on my hard drive, then on Leanpub as an unpublished draft, for years. The method was already proven – teach Rust the same way I’d taught Go, by mapping every concept back to Ruby – but Rust is deeper than Go, and I wanted to get it right.

The first thing I did when learning Rust was try to relate everything back to Ruby. How do I define a class? (You don’t – you use a struct with an `impl` block.) How do I handle exceptions? (You don’t – you use `Result` and the `?` operator.) How do I share data between threads? (Carefully – the borrow checker enforces the rules.) Every answer was a small revelation about how Rust thinks differently.

This book teaches Rust by mapping every concept back to Ruby. If you know how instance variables work in Ruby, you’ll learn how structs work in Rust. If you know `require`, you’ll learn `use` and `mod`. If you know `begin/rescue`, you’ll learn `match` on

Result. No abstract explanations – just the Ruby you know, translated to the Rust you want to learn.

Rust has been the most loved language on Stack Overflow’s developer survey for years running. It powers Firefox’s rendering engine, parts of the Linux kernel, Discord’s backend, Cloudflare’s edge workers, and Dropbox’s storage systems. When performance matters and correctness is non-negotiable, teams reach for Rust.

But more importantly: Rust will make you a better programmer. Learning to think about ownership, to let the compiler verify your concurrency, to use algebraic data types for domain modeling – these patterns will change how you write code in any language, including Ruby.

This book doesn’t ask you to take notes or memorize syntax. Just read, type the examples, and let your Ruby knowledge do the heavy lifting.

Ruby is still my favorite language for getting ideas into code fast. This book is not about leaving Ruby behind – it’s about adding Rust to your toolkit for the problems where performance and correctness matter most.

Let’s get started.

Introduction

Rust is not an object-oriented language. No classes, no inheritance, no garbage collector, no `nil`. If you're coming from Ruby, that sounds like a step backward. But Rust's approach – structs with `impl` blocks instead of classes, traits instead of inheritance, `Option` instead of `nil`, and the borrow checker instead of GC – produces code that is blazingly fast, memory-safe, and free of entire categories of bugs before your code ever runs.

This book is built on one idea: the fastest way for a Rubyist to learn Rust is to map every Rust concept back to Ruby. Each chapter starts with Ruby code you already understand, then shows the Rust equivalent. You're not learning from scratch – you're translating.

Who This Book Is For

You should know Ruby. You don't need to be an expert – if you can read a Ruby class, understand instance variables, and follow a `begin/rescue` block, you have what you need.

You don't need to know Rust at all. Chapter 1 starts from zero.

You don't need to know C or C++. Rust's ownership system will be new to you, and that's fine – this book devotes two full chapters to it.

How to Use This Book

Read in order. Each chapter builds on the last. Ownership (Chapter 4) underpins everything that follows. Skip around and you'll miss the foundation.

Type the examples. Every code sample is complete – copy, paste, and run with `cargo run`. Then modify it. Remove a `&` and watch the borrow checker complain. Try to mutate a value after moving it. The exercises at the end of each section give you specific things to try.

Read the compiler. Rust's error messages are world-class – they explain what went wrong, why, and often suggest the exact fix. When the compiler complains, read the message carefully. It's teaching you.

Read the Key Points. Each major section has a T> callout box summarizing the one thing to remember. If you're skimming or reviewing, these are your landmarks.

Use the exercises. Every chapter ends with hands-on coding challenges. They're not optional – Rust is a language you learn by typing, not by reading. The compiler is your teacher; the exercises are the curriculum.

What This Book Is Not

This is not a Rust reference. It won't cover every standard library module or every language feature. It covers the concepts a Rubyist needs to become productive in Rust – the things you'll actually use day to day.

If you want depth on specific topics after finishing this book, [The Rust Book](#), [Rust by Example](#), and [Rustlings](#) are excellent next steps.

A Note on Editions

This book targets Rust Edition 2024, the current stable edition. All examples have been tested with Rust 1.85+. If you're using an older version, most examples will still work – check `rustc --version` and upgrade with `rustup update` if needed.

About the Author

I've been writing software for over 20 years, from building a Java antivirus engine at VIPRE Security to scaling payment systems at DAZN to 10M+ daily transactions. I started programming as a kid and never stopped. I wrote *From Ruby to Golang* in 2018 and published it in 2019. It reached the top 10 on Amazon and peaked at #3 – proof that the Ruby-to-X method works. That success is why this book exists. I discovered Rust during the pandemic and spent two years learning it before I felt ready to write this book. Rust is a language I believe every backend engineer should know. I live in Amsterdam with my family, where I write, build open-source tools, and work as a Senior Software Engineer.

Chapter 1: Getting Started

Every Rust program starts the same way: a `main` function inside a Cargo project. If you can create a project and write `fn main()`, you're in. Let's get Rust installed and your first program running.

Installing Rust

The recommended way to install Rust is via `rustup` – Rust's toolchain manager. It's like `rbenv` or `rvm` for Ruby, but it's the official solution and comes with the compiler, package manager, and documentation:

```
1 $ curl --proto 'https' --tlsv1.2 -sSf https://sh.rustup.rs | sh
```

After installation, verify everything is there:

```
1 $ rustc --version
2 rustc 1.85.0 (4d91de4e4 2025-02-17)
3
4 $ cargo --version
5 cargo 1.85.0 (d73d7c33d 2025-02-04)
```

`rustc` is the compiler – you'll rarely call it directly. `cargo` is the build tool and package manager – like Bundler and Rake rolled into one.

Creating a New Project

Ruby projects start with a `.rb` file. Rust projects start with `cargo new`:

```
1 $ cargo new hello_world
2    Created binary (application) `hello_world` package
```

This creates:

```
1 hello_world/
2   Cargo.toml
3   src/
4   main.rs
```

`Cargo.toml` is your Gemfile – it declares dependencies, project metadata, and build settings. `src/main.rs` is your entry point.

Here's what `Cargo.toml` looks like:

```
1 [package]
2 name = "hello_world"
3 version = "0.1.0"
4 edition = "2024"
5
6 [dependencies]
```

And `src/main.rs` already contains a working program:

```
1 fn main() {
2     println!("Hello, world!");
3 }
```

Run it with `cargo run`:

```
1 $ cargo run
2     Compiling hello_world v0.1.0
3     Finished dev [unoptimized + debuginfo] target(s)
4     Running `target/debug/hello_world`
5 Hello, world!
```

`cargo run` compiles and runs in one step. Use `cargo build` to compile without running, or `cargo check` to verify it compiles without producing a binary – useful for quick feedback in your editor.

The Main Function



Key Point: `fn main()` is where Rust programs start. It takes no arguments, returns nothing, and every executable must have exactly one.

Every Rust executable needs a `main` function. It's the entry point:

```
1 fn main() {
2     // Your program starts here
3 }
```

Unlike Ruby, where code at the top level executes immediately, Rust requires everything inside `fn main()` (or another function). No top-level `puts` – everything is scoped.

println! — Rust's puts

`println!` works like Ruby's `puts` — it prints a line with a newline:

```
1 println!("Hello World");
```

The `!` means `println` is a macro, not a function. Macros generate code at compile time. For now, you can use `println!` exactly like `puts` — the `!` is just syntax you'll type.

Semicolons end statements in Rust. They're required — unlike Ruby, where they're optional.

To print without a newline, use `print!`:

```
1 print!("Loading");
2 print!(".");
3 println!(" done!");
4 // Loading... done!
```

String Interpolation with `format!`

Ruby's string interpolation uses `#{}`:

```
1 name = "World"
2 puts "Hello, #{name}!"
```

Rust's `println!` uses `{}` placeholders:

```
1 let name = "World";
2 println!("Hello, {}!", name);
```

Multiple values are positional:

```
1 let x = 10;
2 let y = 20;
3 println!("x = {}, y = {}, sum = {}", x, y, x + y);
4 // x = 10, y = 20, sum = 30
```

For debug output, use `{:?}` – this works like Ruby’s `inspect`:

```
1 let numbers = vec![1, 2, 3];
2 println!("numbers = {:?}", numbers);
3 // numbers = [1, 2, 3]
```

`format!` works like `sprintf` in Ruby – it returns a `String` instead of printing:

```
1 let name = "World";
2 let greeting = format!("Hello, {}!", name);
3 println!("{}", greeting);
```

Functions



Key Point: Rust uses functions for everything. No classes, no methods on objects – just `fn`. If you come from Ruby, this is the biggest structural shift, but `impl` blocks (Chapter 3) bring back the familiar dot-call pattern.

Defining Functions

A function starts with `fn`, then the name, then parameters, an optional return type, and a body:

```
1 fn greet() {
2     println!("Hello, World!");
3 }
```

Parameters

Parameters require explicit types – unlike Ruby, Rust won't guess:

```
1 fn greet(name: &str) {
2     println!("Hello, {}!", name);
3 }
4
5 greet("World");
```

`&str` is a string slice – Rust's closest equivalent to Ruby's `String`. We'll cover strings in depth in Chapter 9. For now, think of `&str` as “a reference to a string.”

Multiple parameters separate with commas. Each needs its own type:

```
1 fn greet(greeting: &str, name: &str) {
2     println!("{}", {}, name);
3 }
4
5 greet("Hello", "World");
```

Return Values

Return types come after the arrow `->`. In Rust, the last expression without a semicolon is the return value – no `return` keyword needed:

```
1 fn greet(greeting: &str, name: &str) -> String {
2     format!("{}", {}, greeting, name)
3 }
4
5 fn main() {
6     let message = greet("Hello", "World");
7     println!("{}", message);
8 }
```

The absence of a semicolon on `format!(...)` means “return this value.” This is Rust’s expression-oriented nature – nearly everything produces a value.

Use `return` for early returns:

```
1 fn divide(a: f64, b: f64) -> Option<f64> {
2     if b == 0.0 {
3         return None;
4     }
5     Some(a / b)
6 }
```

`option` is Rust’s replacement for `nil` – it’s either `Some(value)` or `None`, and the compiler forces you to handle both cases. We’ll cover `option` in depth in Chapter 4.

Cargo Commands Cheat Sheet

Command	What It Does
<code>cargo new <name></code>	Create a new project
<code>cargo build</code>	Compile the project
<code>cargo run</code>	Compile and run
<code>cargo check</code>	Check if it compiles (faster, no binary)
<code>cargo test</code>	Run tests
<code>cargo fmt</code>	Format your code
<code>cargo clippy</code>	Run the linter

Chapter Exercises



1. Create a new Cargo project called `greeter`. Write a `main` function that prints your name, your favorite programming language, and the current date. Use `println!` with `{}` placeholders for all three.



2. Write a function `greet` that takes a `name: &str` and returns a greeting `String`. Call it from `main` and print the result. Then modify it to return a `Result<String, String>` — `return Err("name is empty".to_string())` if the name is empty. Handle the error in `main` with a `match` (we'll cover this properly in Chapter 4 — just follow the pattern for now).



3. Create a second function `add` that takes two `i32` integers and returns their sum. Call it from `main`. Then add a third function `div` that returns `Option<i32>` — `None` if the divisor is zero. Print the results of both with `{:?}` for the `Option`.

Summary

You can now create, build, and run Rust programs. `cargo new` scaffolds your project. `fn main()` is your entry point. `println!` and `format!` replace `puts` and string interpolation. Functions use `fn`, explicit parameter types, and the `->` arrow for return types.

These building blocks never change. Come back here when you need a refresher.

In the next chapter, you'll learn Rust's variable system – `let`, `mut`, shadowing, and how Rust's type inference differs from Ruby's dynamic typing.

Chapter 2: Variables, Types, and Mutability

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let – Variable Binding

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Type Inference and Explicit Types

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Compound Types: Tuples and Arrays

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Tuples

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Accessing Fields

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Struct Update Syntax

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Unit Structs

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Associated Functions (Constructors)

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Multiple impl Blocks

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Defining an Enum

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Mutable References

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The Borrowing Rules

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Multiple Immutable References – OK

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Mutable + Immutable – ERROR

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One Mutable – OK

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Collecting into Result and Option

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Generics in impl Blocks

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String – Owned, Mutable

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&str – Borrowed, Immutable

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String Concatenation and format!

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Indexing into Strings

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When the Compiler Needs Lifetime Annotations

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