Finding Employment as a (New) Programmer

There's a lot to think about as you start looking for your first programming-related job. This checklist can help you think more clearly about all of the individual steps you'll need to take, and the process as a whole.

Background knowledge and projects

- Learn the fundamentals of programming: variables, lists, dictionaries, loops, conditional statements, functions, classes, working with files, and testing your code
- Complete several larger-scale projects from a book or other learning resource
- Build a meaningful project of your own, or add a significant set of features to a project you started in a tutorial
- Learn about some intermediate concepts such as generators, async, recursion, regular expressions, algorithms, data structures, and more
- Become familiar with the official Python documentation
- Become familiar with the documentation of other libraries you use
- Build a professional portfolio
- Learn to use some of the advanced features of your editor or IDE
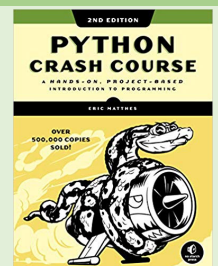- Use a version control system such as Git to manage your projects

Searching for jobs

- Decide what kinds of jobs you're most interested in
- Research companies and organizations you might want to work for
- Find a job board with relevant listings, and follow it for new opportunities
- Attend a meetup or conference, or find an online programming-related community to join
- Build your professional network

Applying for jobs

- Write a base resume that's mostly for you
- Adapt your resume to at least one specific kind of job you're looking for
- Write a cover letter for each job you're interested in applying to
- Submit an application for at least one open position (It can be tempting to keep putting off this important step!)
- Practice interviewing with a friend or colleague
- Go through an interview, and make written notes about the process
- Use your experiences so far to focus what you're currently learning, and what you're currently building
- Continue to build your personal and professional networks
- Continue reading and learning about the job-searching process
- Be prepared to negotiate a market-rate salary that's fair to your level of experience and knowledge

After you land your first job

- Ask the questions you need in order to perform well in your job
- Stay long enough to complete meaningful projects and make specific contributions
- Keep an eye out for the right time to change jobs, as you gain experience
- Develop expertise in one area of programming, without letting yourself get stuck
- Continue to learn on your own time, while maintaining a healthy work-life balance
- Find ways to help those who are just starting out on their professional journey