

apprentice.io

Welcome to apprentice.io!

We're excited to have you here. This packet contains information that past apprentices have found helpful.

We recommend looking through it now and referring back to it later. Think of this packet as your Hitchhiker's Guide during your apprenticeship. Don't Panic!

This packet is available at <https://github.com/thoughtbot/apprentice-onboarding>. Feel free to file a pull request to improve any aspect of it, no matter how tiny.

The Plan

Your first two months are spent learning. At the end of your second month, you'll meet with Chad Pytel or Dan Croak to discuss your next step. During that meeting, you'll be asked "What do you want to do after your apprenticeship?"

If you have decided at that point that thoughtbot is not for you, no worries. We can work with you over the next month to help find job prospects.

If you want to work at thoughtbot, tell Chad or Dan. They will be prepared to either make you an offer or tell you there isn't an available spot for you at thoughtbot.

Don't worry! We will do everything we can to make your three months as amazing as we can and prepare you for your step after the apprenticeship.

Your mentor

Your first mentor's name is: _____. You'll get a new mentor each month.

This person is your guide for the month.

How am I doing?

You will meet with your mentor once a week on Friday to talk through your progress.

We encourage you to create a backpack page where you list your goals for the next week and how you did on your goals for the past week. This is a good document to discuss with your mentor each week. For an example of how previous apprentices have done this, search in Backpack.

When you switch mentors, you will have a Mentor Hand-off. This is a meeting with both mentors to talk through the previous month and the plan for the next month.

Pairing during the week

You will work with them on client projects Monday-Thursday, traveling with them to the client site if necessary/appropriate. Your mentor will pair with you during the week as you work on user stories.

Pairing is the fastest and most effective way to learn, so it should be a priority for you and your mentor. However, do not expect to pair 100% of the time. One particularly effective method of pairing is Ping-Ponging. The idea is for Person 1 to write a test, Person 2 writes the code to make the test pass. Then Person 2 writes the next test and Person 1 writes the code to make the test pass. Rinse, repeat.

We also encourage you to pair with other apprentices (designer/developer teams work great) as well as with thoughtbot employees who are not your mentor. Everyone on the team loves teaching and learning, and they'd love to teach and learn from you. A good way to do it is to announce during standup that you're looking for someone to pair with, and if people have free time (usually only Fridays, since that's when everyone gets a break from client work), they'll tell you.

Self-guided learning

Whenever appropriate or applicable to whatever you are working on, you should take time away from client work to do some self-guided learning. This can involve reading chapters in books, attending workshops, or learning about and trying out a technique/library.

We recommend starting with Apprenticeship Patterns.

Workshops

We encourage learning. We run workshops and sell webcasts (both on <http://learn.thoughtbot.com>), which are free for you. You can and should take advantage of these.

Use the coupon code APPRENTICE2012 to get anything on Learn for free.

Training @ Bocoup

We also have a partnership with Bocoup, where you can take any of their workshops (<http://training.bocoup.com>) for free as well. They offer training in Open Web technologies like HTML5 and JavaScript.

Backpack has information on how to sign up for these courses for free. Search "Bocoup training" or just go to <https://thoughtbot.backpackit.com/bocoup-training>.

If there are other apprentices interested, it would be best to coordinate with them first and just send one email.

Getting the Most Out of apprentice.io

Expectations

Your apprenticeship is an opportunity. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it.

There is some structure to guide you through the program and also people available to help you along the way, but the engine of this experience is your effort. Learning should take up some of your evening/weekend time.

You should expect this to be a mentally intense period of your life where you are learning a great deal. Hard work pays off.

Your trail map

On your first day, fork the Trail Map (<https://github.com/thoughtbot/trail-map>) and edit it with your mentor to find trails that match your goals. It can be any of the trails, but stick with them and track your progress. Also, submitting pull requests back to the main repo will strengthen the trail map for everyone.

Breakable Toy

A Breakable Toy (<http://redsquirrel.com/dave/work/a2j/patterns/BreakableToys.html>) is a side Rails project you are excited/passionate about.

This project should be an anchor to your learning, allowing you to raise new questions and a place to apply new skills/techniques. To get the most out of it, you should put the code in Github and give your mentors and apprentice cohort access to the project. You should also deploy it to Heroku.

There is no expectation for other apprentices to contribute to your project, but everyone should have access and input is welcome.

A team that has a designer apprentice and a developer apprentice has worked very well for both designer and developer in the past. Don't be afraid to ask if someone wants to work with you!

Investment Days

You should use investment days to work on open-source projects, or internal thoughtbot projects. For a list of ideas, you should look at the **Apprentice.io Projects** Trello board, which is available in the list of boards at: <https://trello.com> . As always, if you don't see it there, ask your mentor for help.

Feedback

It's not easy, but you should get comfortable asking for and receiving feedback. People are nice and none of it is personal. It's a great way to develop professionally.

Tools and Weapons

Laptop setup

Your mentor will help you get your laptop set up. We recommend the laptop script available at <https://github.com/thoughtbot/laptop>.

Logins

We use many different websites at thoughtbot, and everyone should have accounts for them. Having access will make it much easier for you to participate in thoughtbot's internal conversations.

The list of services is below. By the end of your first week, you should have access to all of them.

Google apps

URL: <http://google.com/a/apprentice.io>

You should have received an email with your email (NAME@apprentice.io) and email password.

We use the calendar extensively - add someone else's calendar to keep track of what other people are doing.

Dropbox (<http://dropbox.com>)

You have access to the "Library" Dropbox folder. This folder contains workshops, books, papers, and other resources that we've purchased in the past and now share with everyone at thoughtbot. It's an easy way to learn something for free.

Tumblr (<http://tumblr.com>)

Our company blog (<http://robots.thoughtbot.com>) is actually hosted on Tumblr. In order to make a blog post, you need a tumblr account. When you have an account, ask anyone at the company to give you access to the blog. We *strongly* encourage you to make a blog post!

Even things that you think are silly, like a git tip that takes 3 lines and that you're *sure* everyone else knows, is worthy of a blog post. Often our most popular blog posts are the ones that we thought were the silliest. For example, <http://j.mp/LP72NP> is pretty dumb but got 18 comments.

We also have a semi-secret blog of funny Campfire quotes at <http://tinyrobots.thoughtbot.com>.

37signals Suite (Basecamp/Backpack/Campfire)

37signals runs a suite of applications that we use. You should have received a 37Signals invitation in your apprentice.io email. Ensure that you have access to the following:

- Campfire: <http://thoughtbot.campfirenow.com/>
- Backpack: <https://thoughtbot.backpackit.com/>
- Basecamp: <https://basecamp.com/1719045>

If any of those sites give you an error, talk to your mentor. Once you have access to Backpack, check out this onboarding page: <https://thoughtbot.backpackit.com/pages/2661936-employee-onboarding>. Some things, like BambooHR and health care, don't apply to you.

Trajectory

We use Trajectory to manage our projects. Each client has their own account, and your mentor will invite you to whichever project you are assigned to.

If you'd like to get familiar with Trajectory before your apprenticeship, you can create a free account at <https://www.apptrajectory.com/plans>.

Campfire

We use Campfire *constantly*. Use a desktop Campfire client like Propane (<http://propaneapp.com/>); it's much better than the web interface. It will ask you to register it when you start it, but you can ignore that and it will work fine.

Campfire has rooms with a specific purpose:

- Everyone: discuss things that interest everyone. You should be in this room whenever you are working.
- Code: discuss your code. When asking a question, pasting your code is encouraged.
- apprentice.io: discuss apprentice-specific topics and talk to other mentors and apprentices.
- Design: discuss design topics or cool design that you've encountered.
- Watercooler (a/k/a WC): this is where we post animated GIFs and lolcats. Don't post lolcats in other rooms. Sometimes you'll be told "WC!" - that means you should take it to Watercooler.
- Most of the other rooms are specific to projects and are named after the project.

Both designers and developers should check out both the Code and Design rooms - everyone's welcome in every room.

Basecamp

Basecamp is where we put ideas that we want to discuss, like product ideas or a new Git workflow.

Backpack

We have things like general company policies and non-technical discussion and announcements in backpack. If you have a question about anything HR related, look in backpack first.

You should use your homepage in Backpack (there's a link in the Backpack sidebar) to track your progress.

Dotfiles

Dotfiles are the files in your home directory (referred to as "~") that start with a dot, like "~/.bashrc". They are used to configure various programs, e.g. "~/.vimrc" sets some global options for "vim". Take a look at thoughtbot's dotfiles (<https://github.com/thoughtbot/dotfiles>), and feel free to fork them. We also encourage you to check out your coworkers' dotfiles for inspiration. For example, Josh Clayton has an extensive configuration for tmux in his dotfiles: <https://github.com/joshuaclayton/dotfiles>

Community

Part of your apprenticeship is learning to be part of a development community. This could be a Ruby Meetup Group, company, or project team.

Meeting people is easy

We are a friendly bunch and we'd like to get to know you better! That being said, it's easy to feel intimidated or uncomfortable in a new environment. Some things you should try:

- Go on coffee walks: we often have informal "coffee walks" at 3-ish, where people go for a walk (coffee optional) and chat about random topics.
- Go get lunch/coffee/breakfast with anyone in the office.
- Suggest a social event for your project team.

Friday Lunches

We order lunch for the whole office each Friday! Please let our office manager Seana (seana@thoughtbot.com) know if you have any allergies or dietary restrictions we should be aware of.

Who?

If you're having trouble matching names to faces, check out <http://thoughtbot.com/about>, which has pictures and names of everyone at the company (except apprentices). To see pictures of apprentices, go to <http://apprentice.io/apprentices>.

Development Discussions

We have weekly development discussions most Fridays from 3-4pm in a conference room upstairs. We discuss topics like how to design object oriented systems and the style guide. Development apprentices especially are strongly encouraged to attend.

Design Discussions

We hold these at 3(ish) PM on Fridays when there are enough designers. It's a place to show off what you've been working on as well as a mini-critique. Designer apprentices are strongly encouraged to attend.

Boston.rb

The boston ruby group (bostonrb.org/calendar) meets every Tuesday, alternating Project Nights (where people hack together) and presentations. It's a great place to learn something, as well as to practice your public speaking by submitting a talk. Speaking at boston.rb is great practice since it's a smallish, friendly audience, and it gives your resume a nice bump.

Improve apprentice.io

We encourage you to propose changes to the apprentice process, including hiring, onboarding, and anything else that you think could be better. Everyone at thoughtbot is constantly trying to do a better job and we welcome feedback.

As an apprentice, you have much better insight into what could make the process better for you than does someone who's been working here for five years.

Feedback is always, always appreciated on everything at thoughtbot. If you have feedback on the overall apprentice program, please contact Gabe Berke-Williams, the head of the apprentice.io program.

This page is intentionally left blank. Please write down interesting things you've learned, tips, and areas where apprentice.io could improve. We encourage feedback on apprentice.io and [thoughtbot](https://thoughtbot.com).