**Attending a Bootcamp**

**How did you choose your bootcamp?**

Great question! It was tricky, and involved a lot of research. Back in 2016, bootcamps were still pretty new, and it was hard to know which ones were actually the best vs. claiming they were the best. Personally, I recommend bootcamps that are transparent with their numbers and outcomes. Where are the students who have graduated working now? What are the qualifications of the staff and faculty? Additionally, I took many people out to coffee who had recently graduated from a bootcamp. These meetings provided great insight, and gave me a better idea of what the programs were like, Ultimately, I decided on Hackbright because I believed in their mission statement to #ChangeTheRatio of women in tech. I also attended an in-person information session and immediately fell in love with the inclusive environment (and they had plushies everywhere!). I encourage you to do your own research and figure out what the best fit is for you.

**How did you pay for your bootcamp?**

I mostly lived off credit cards, cashed out a bunch of old bongs I had, and had a couple supportive friends and family members assist with additional costs. Many bootcamps have their own recommended loans and financial aide. Other programs take a percentage of your paycheck once your hired, others are free- there are a lot of ways to find financial help (and scholarships as well!). Going to a bootcamp is a huge financial commitment, but the great news is that software engineering salaries are pretty high- especially in the Bay Area, and especially for someone like me coming from a theatre background.

**What’s a good language to learn in a bootcamp?**

There’s not a specific language I’d suggest for a bootcamp. Bootcamps teach you how to learn a language- you may not even use the language of your bootcamp in your first role! My program taught Python and Javascript. These days, I use Java, Javascript, a little Kotlin here and there, and every so often some random language I’ve never used before for a specific API I’m working with. Ruby, Python, and React are great to learn at the start (and CSS + HTML of course). If you’ve been learning a specific language up until now, perhaps find a program teaching that one!

**How long did it take you to get a job?**

Three months. The average at Hackbright was about 3-6 months. As someone who mentors bootcamp students, I can confidentially say that the 3-6 month range is a solid guess for most folks. Especially since many bootcamp grads are learning to whiteboard for the first time in their life, and interviewing as an engineer is an entirely new skill for most. I encourage grads to study problems on LeetCode daily, work on side projects (to build up your portfolio) and contribute to open source projects (even small contributions help, and help you learn!).

**Am I too old?**

Not at all! People of all ages attend bootcamps. Recent high school grads, moms, people in their 30s- there is a huge range. There is room for everyone. During my bootcamp, we even had a pregnant cohort mate!

**Can I work part time?**

Yes, some bootcamps are part time. I will warn you that learning will take a lot longer. The 12-week intense program I did was a lot of info at once, but I couldn’t imagine having to work a job and learn recursion in the same day (let alone same week). But if you think your learning style is different- you do you!

**Will I get a job?**

Well, that’s up to you. Once your bootcamp ends, it will be up to you to study, whiteboard, and interview for a junior engineering role. It will be tough, but it has been done by many! Don’t give up! The highs are very high during the job search, and the lows are very low. But trust me, if I can work in tech- you can, too! I swore it’d never happen. I still think I’m an imposter! Haha

**How much does it cost?**

That will depend on what bootcamp you choose! Some programs are free like Techtonica, other’s ask for tuition upfront like Hackbright. There are also programs with deferred tuition. Definitely take this into consideration while choosing your bootcamp. Many folks take out loans. Hackbright was about $20,000. I certainly did not have that much money at the time, and had to get creative.

**How much code do I need to know?**

That will depend on the bootcamp you choose- some are for complete beginners; others require a certain amount of hours of study. Often these programs will assess your programming ability when applying.

**Do I need a laptop?**

Most likely yes, but some programs and scholarships provide them. You’ll want to run the specs of your device by the staff, as not all computers will work well for programming. Many folks unable to afford a computer have found folks on Twitter who have donated devices to them. Don’t worry- your bootcamp will help you!

**What happens at a bootcamp?**

Well, that depends on the bootcamp. Typically, you’ll attend classes Monday-Friday all day, have homework, and often take home assessments or projects to be completed over the weekend. You’ll learn about a wide variety of software engineering topics, and dive deeply into a language or two. Typically, bootcamps end with a final project (mine was individual, but other courses do group projects). Your bootcamp will then begin to prepare you for whiteboarding interviews, and set you out into the world to interview as a software engineer (or whatever technical role you’re looking to obtain)!

**Where can I see examples of projects made at a bootcamp?**

Google is a great place to start! Here’s a post about the projects made during my cohort at Hackbright- I believe they still post these for all the new cohorts, so you can see a bunch of examples on their blog: <https://hackbrightacademy.com/blog/brilliant-web-apps-built-by-women-engineers/>

**What kind of job can I get after attending a bootcamp?**

Typically, junior or entry level programming jobs. Personally, I went into a Junior Developer Evangelist role at a start-up in Silicon Valley.

**Do I get a degree at the end?**

No, you’ll likely get some sort of certificate of completion. Some bootcamps offer college credit and partner with accredited programs and universities. You’ll have to check with whatever specific bootcamp you’re attending.

**How long are bootcamps?**

Bootcamps range in length depending on the program- they can be anywhere from 12 weeks to 6 months to 2 years.

**Are there options for people with day jobs?**

Yes- many programs offer part-time programs. These often are longer than the usual 12 week format.

**Is it true that people with CS degrees go to/can benefit from bootcamps?**

Yes- many folks with CS degrees attend bootcamps for various reasons. Sometimes to learn new skills, languages, DevOps processes, mobile development, etc.

**I’m 18, have means (parents) who will pay for my college, should I get a 4 year CS degree or do a 12 week bootcamp?**

That’s up to you! I know folks who have done a bootcamp in place of college and have seen success, but personally if I had the opportunity to attend a 4 year college for computer science, I would have! Bootcamps are fantastic for folks like me who didn’t have the time/money for a 4 year degree later in life- but it would have been cool to deep dive into more topics at a university! But alas- I have a theatre degree… ;)

**What is the admissions process like?**

That will depend on the bootcamp. Mine consisted of several rounds. An online coding challenge, essay questions, in person interview, and some pair programming. These are usually to assess your technical ability to see if it’s a good match for the program.

**Is there a money back guarantee?**

That will depend on the bootcamp. I’d say that promise would be rare, but I’ve seen it.

**What is the graduation or job placement rate?**

That will depend on the bootcamp. Make sure to check out the stats on their site!

**Is there any support (career coach, resume review, etc) leading up to and after graduation?**

Yes- often bootcamps have a career service team. At Hackbright, we had some amazing folks help us with our resumes, cover letters, job applications, interviewing, etc. If your bootcamp does not offer this, make sure you have a mentor or two to help you with this (especially negotiating!).

**Do you need a 4 year degree to get a job or get hired as a software engineer?**

I hope not- then I’d be out of a job at Microsoft! Nowadays, coming from a bootcamp (or having no formal training at all) is common at most large companies. You can be self taught, from a bootcamp, or any flavor of learning to get a job as an engineer.

**Is there a part-time or weekend option?**

Yes- many programs offer part-time, weekend, or night classes. These often are longer than the usual 12 weeks.

**What is the type of work available to people with this kind of education? What is a work day like in this career?**

Typically junior or entry level engineering roles. However many folks (myself included) have gone on to Developer Evangelists, Sales Engineers, DevOps Engineers—the list goes on!

**Is it a M-F 9-5 type of thing? Any flexibility in schedule?**

Yes, typically they are all day and very full-time. Typically, there is very little flexibility with the full-time programs.

**Should I go to a bootcamp instead of college?**

That’s up to you! I know folks who have done a bootcamp in place of college and have seen success, but personally if I had the opportunity to attend a 4 year college for computer science, I would have! Bootcamps are fantastic for folks like me who didn’t have the time/money for a 4 year degree later in life- but it would have been cool to deep dive into more topics at a university! But alas- I have a theatre degree… ;)

**I’m a woman / trans / a minority should I go to a bootcamp?**

PLEASE!!!! We need more diversity in tech. Everyone is welcome! There are even some programs are specific to gender, ethnicity, etc. You’ll want to make sure you find one that’s a good fit for you.

**Is a bootcamp better than college?**

Hmmmm… depends! I know folks who have done a bootcamp in place of college and have seen success, but personally if I had the opportunity to attend a 4 year college for computer science, I would have! Bootcamps are fantastic for folks like me who didn’t have the time/money for a 4 year degree later in life- but it would have been cool to deep dive into more topics at a university! But alas- I have a theatre degree… ;)

**Are there bootcamps for men?**

Yes! Many (and likely most) bootcamps are open to men.

**Are there bootcamps for women?**

Yes! Hackbright and Grace Hopper to name a few.

**Do I need to be good at math?**

lol I hope not- I’m not great at math.

**Why did you go to a bootcamp?**

I went to a bootcamp because I didn’t learn to program (or even know what “STEM” was) until about 5 years ago. I had a theatre degree and was working various tech admin jobs by day. Once I discovered programming could be a potential career for me, I put theatre on hold and started to learn how to code. Now, 5 years later, I’m working at Microsoft and I love my job (in fact, I built this bot for it!). I still get to a lot of fun theatre + arts related stuff as well. Plus, Developer Advocacy requires a lot of public speaking and on-camera time, which are skills I obtained from my theatre degree! In short, I went to a bootcamp to change my career.

**Would you recommend any particular bootcamps?**

I attended Hackbright in 2016, and it changed my life. I’ve also worked programs and students from Kenzie Academy, Holberton School, Hack Reactor, FullStack Academy, Techtonica— the list goes on! I don’t have just one to recommend- definitely do your research.

**Do I need a degree to attend a bootcamp?**

Nope- not usually.

**Do bootcamps help with job placement?**

Yes- often bootcamps have a career service team (and some even prromise job placement!). At Hackbright, we had some amazing folks help us with our resumes, cover letters, job applications, interviewing, etc. If your bootcamp does not offer this, make sure you have a mentor or two to help you with this (especially negotiating!).

**What are the best bootcamps?**

I attended Hackbright in 2016, and it changed my life. I’ve also worked programs and students from Kenzie Academy, Holberton School, Hack Reactor, FullStack Academy, Techtonica— the list goes on! I don’t have just one to recommend- definitely do your research.

**Are bootcamps hard?**

Yes, extremely. I won’t sugar coat it- it’s a fire hose of info being shot at you. It’s not for the faint of heart. Also, make sure you have a good emotional support system while you attend- be that a friend, partner, mentor, or perhaps a mental health professional through apps like TalkSpace.

**How many hours will I spend on the bootcamp out of the classroom?**

Just assume you’ll be eating, sleeping, and breathing your bootcamp at all times during the program.

**What are the salaries for bootcamp grads?**

That depends on your location. In the Bay Area, entry level junior engineering salaries can range anywhere from $90k-$110k.

**What kind of job can I get from a bootcamp?**

Typically junior or entry level engineering roles. However many folks (myself included) have gone on to Developer Evangelists, Sales Engineers, DevOps Engineers—the list goes on!

**Are there developer evangelist or developer advocate bootcamps?**

Not that I know of- but I’d personally recommend attending a fullstack bootcamp if you’d like to go into evangelism. Then, perhaps seek out an apprenticeship or internship that specializes in evangelism or advocacy (I believe Twilio and GitHub have had these in the past).

**Can I get an internship after a bootcamp?**

It’s been done, but personally, I found this to be pretty difficult. Internships often require GPAs and transcripts (something you will not get from your bootcamp). However, many apprenticeships and internships have been popping up in the last 5 years focused on bootcamp grads, and folks from non-traditional learning backgrounds. I encourage you to research what’s out there!