

Pro-Tips to win Hack-a-thon

- **Plan to Win**

Be clear on your motive for attending the hackathon. Be hungry to win. Plan and prepare for the hackathon in advance. Set up any templates, Github repositories, and components that can help build prototypes faster. Do your research, study APIs, and go through sample applications. If the theme or topic is available in advance, brainstorm with your team. Be ready with practical ideas that can be implemented fast.

Additionally, conduct a mock hackathon a week before the competition. Work together as a team, and get to know your teammates well. Know your team's strengths and weaknesses. Figure out ways to distribute work evenly. Work on any specific challenges that you face. Decide on the communication channel for exchanging files and messages.

- **Form a team**

Planning is the easy part. Success depends on the implementation of plans. It takes a team effort to implement ideas. When team members have good chemistry, it is easier to work under pressure and build something cool, really fast. Team up with friends with whom you have a good rapport. If you have friends from previous hackathons, get them on board as well. If there is a chance to pitch your idea and form your team, be ready with your pitch in advance. Explain your idea with a clear and concise description.

While forming the team, look for the skills that you need for building the prototype.

- **Think through your ideas**

All the hackathon ideas are not great. At a hackathon, you won't find the time either to execute everything you plan. After generating ideas, filter them based on the value they provide. Think like a product owner and try to build a Minimum Viable Product (MVP). Focus on the main problem statement: Who is the end user? What is your hypothesis? What problem are you solving for them?

Consider the time involved in executing the ideas. Pick only those features that you can build in 72 hours. With a clear product vision, you can create a rough prototype on paper. Share this with your team so that everyone knows what the key components are and who is building what.

- **Validate concepts**

Don't jump to conclusions about concepts without researching. Be clear on what you are building and why. Share the dependencies, priorities, and checkpoints with the team. Talk to potential end users or customers of the product. Understand their pain points. Include these insights in your presentation. Validate the concept before prototyping and after building the product.

- **Focus on building an MVP**

To win any hackathon, you need a good MVP with a well-thought-out value proposition. While it may be tempting to chase multiple ideas, it is not practical to build a lot of features in a short period of time. Address the opportunities and limitations of your product beforehand. Work on two or three primary components to build a working prototype.

- **Set up a repository on Github**

Set up a repository on Github to create your product. Use the feature branches to help your team develop new features.

- **Choose the right approach**

Prioritize on creating a fully functional front-end product experience. Setting up the backend takes up a lot of time that, you cannot afford to lose at a hackathon.

- **Take short breaks**

After hours of coding, taking a break is a good idea. A short break is not only refreshing but also provides the opportunity to check in as a team and update each other on the progress of the project. Go for short breaks and who knows, you may even come back with the next big idea that could win the hackathon.