

Preparing for a Computer Major

Knowing what career field, you want to go in, is a big life decision. A section in your life that can affect your overall happiness. So how do you know computer science is the right decision for you, and how can you prepare for a computing major? In the following paper, I explain what helped me get into the computer science field, as well as some effective habits.

Personally, growing up I never thought of going down the road of computers, I enjoyed the marketing side of business. Not until freshman year, I met a friend who showed me what computer programming was. Explained if math was my better subject than computer science could be concept I could really grasp. Not enrolled in any computer science classes at the time, I went online and explored my options. Watching YouTube videos and doing my research, I came across the [codecademy.com](https://www.codecademy.com), where I learned to write my first few lines of code and what languages it took to build a website. I was instantly engaged and knew I could enjoy doing this for a long period of time and take it to all sorts of areas of the world. Plus, the pay from what I found was not bad either.

Overall, I don't necessarily have a passion for computer science. I find it will be a great tool for where the future is heading. Comparing it to other majors, it seemed like the one that made most sense for me. The work required will be mind testing and even mind bending. I have gone through a coding 'boot camp' they call it. I have found that consistency is key. With a concept hard to grasp, taking a few days off made me feel miles behind.

Habits are very powerful. Being able to develop effective habits can help with your success in the job field. Based on an article found on the site simpleprogrammer.com, they list

out 7 effective habits, like “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” written by Stephen Covey.

These habits are more programmer focused. First, is being proactive. There are things in this world that are out of your control, and people waste precious time and energy trying to change this, but it is not possible. Instead things that are controllable should always be the number one focus. For example, how you react to a response, your attitude, going to bed early to wake up early the next morning. Believe it or not, daily decisions can be mentally draining. Adjusting your daily decision to what will benefit you will have more positive result on your life.

Second, is begin with the end in mind. In other words, have a clear and concise goal. A common New Years Resolution is, get into better shape. Well that goal doesn't last long if there is no planning involved. Setting specific days of the week to go for a run or hit the gym, along with including a nutrition plan are steps to becoming fit this year. Reviewing your goals and plans to get there, keeps you consistent with your life goals.

Next is, put first things first. People have the tendency to procrastinate some projects. Procrastination is not a sign of laziness, but a way to avoid stress. Instead of accomplishing the important items on our to do list, we turn to the tasks that hold the less consequences. Steven Covey recommends great advice, by explaining “The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule but to schedule your priorities.” It's helpful advice because you can spend energy on important tasks, while the other of less importance take up so much of your time.

A well said analogy I learned while going through the coding boot camp, was “How do you eat an elephant?” Its one bite at a time. The point here is sometimes there is no easy way to a finished task other than to keep on hammering at it.

Having a Win-Win attitude is the 4th habit you can learn. While some people rely on other people's failure to make themselves look good, it shouldn't work that way. Being willing to help your teammate or other colleagues on a project will benefit both you. Asking the question, "How can I help them and still benefit what I am doing?" Arguments or disagreements may still be present in the relationship, but it doesn't mean it can't result in a conclusion and outcome that work out. Learning how to treat other people nicely will benefit you greatly and make you enjoyable to be around. This builds on the 5th habit, seek first to understand, then to be understood. Too often we are looking down at our phones, and not at the faces of our colleagues. Being able to show respect to your peers and listening to them will make them want to reciprocate the same action and listen to what yourself has to say. On top of that, there is a learning aspect gained, when being able to understand something yourself and later being fluent enough, you able to teach it to someone else. As a team of developers working on a project this is how we learn and willing to learn from our colleagues.

One of the last habits is synergy. Google which has been growing with their number of employees and the number of groups they have, found the most productive teams were those that cultivated synergy and psychological safety. Employees who came into work felt like they could express themselves to their team without the feeling of embarrassment or be discriminated towards their ideas. This maximizes each teammate potential and makes them feel credible. To be an effective member of the team, encourage positive reinforcement and seeing things from their point of view with out them fearing embarrassment.

Finally, the last habit that can really help you become an effective programmer, is "sharpening the saw". People can get overwhelmed with work as well as other aspects of their

life. Take the time to sharpen ourselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. This allows us to perform at our top selves. Balance is key, and just like practicing or reading other people's code, staying fit, eating healthy, and having patience with yourself will make you feel more confident about your day's work. Abraham Lincoln said, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe."

I felt these habits were important to cover for couple reasons. If we can first learn them and integrate them into our lives early on, we'll thank ourselves later down the road while new life tasks are thrown in our direction. These habits are also characteristics of what a leader is. While some programmers work best with just being told what to do, it's never a bad thing to have a leader's instinct inside of you. Lastly, I mentioned earlier coding is more of a skill to me, rather than a passion. Personally, if coding doesn't turn into a career, I would still like to apply these programming habits into my next chapter.

References:

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