

CodeCrew: Code School Reflections

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Pre-Code School

My name is Andrew Daunais and this is the very beginning of my journey through an education in coding through CodeCrew Code School. I can see that video logs are the more preferred way to document our progress, and perhaps someday I'll get more confident to do that sort of thing. But I've always been partial to journaling, so for now this is how I'll structure my reflections.

As for why I want to learn code, that comes from the way I find my brain works best. I enjoy defined structures and organized paths to follow. As I got to learn a bit of code just through self-teaching, I found myself picking it up rather quickly. This was incredibly exciting because I've never really experienced something that I feel I can be quick and competitive in (in a self-marketing sense).

After bootcamp, I would like to find a job that works more with back-end development. I believe this is where I could thrive because I enjoy thinking practically and doing problem solving more on the accessibility side of things rather than the design end. My long-term goals that I believe will help me to stay strong through the challenges of the next 6 months is that being a strong member of this class will serve as a path to a better life for myself that includes a stable job that I can perform well in.

As for the costs and benefits of the program itself, I think a huge benefit will be the accelerated nature of it. This may be quite difficult to keep up with, but I intend on doing everything in my power to keep up and retain the information as it comes in at this accelerated pace because I know I'll come out on the other end as a strong developer. I think one cost of doing this program is that I won't be coming out of it with a degree, and this could harm my competitiveness when searching for jobs in the field. But I know that Code School will help me to build a strong enough portfolio for me to prove to any company that I'm an employee worth hiring.

Finally, just a few takeaways from the pre-work packet we completed. One huge takeaway was just how much every little piece of the code matters. In the open house class, one string of my code wasn't working, and I didn't know why. In the end, it turned out I was missing a semicolon and that was it. I definitely need to make sure I gain an acute attention to detail with code. Another takeaway was just how much you can rearrange and optimize a single line of code. I'm curious to dive further into this and develop my own coding "style" that works best for me. I'm excited to see how I'll personally want to organize my code to make sense not only to myself but to other developers who might want to look into my code and see what I did. I'll keep journaling about my experience as I go, and I'm extremely excited to go on this new learning journey!

8/11/2019

Week 1

After my first week, my biggest takeaway is that I'm having an AMAZING time! I know these reflections are meant to highlight both the highs and lows throughout the week, but so far I'm really just having the best time. So far, things have really been clicking for me and I feel very capable of keeping up with the pace of the program. I really feel like I'm getting a solid understanding of what things like for/while loops, variables, prompts, and functions are actually doing at a practical level which really excites me because I will likely have an easier time translating those functional concepts into the syntax of other languages. I'll be honest, I don't have too terribly much I feel like I can more specifically comment on at the moment because I'm mostly just feeling hopeful about the future. I'm very confident that I'll be able to persevere as the program becomes more complex and challenging because I'll have a strong foundation in the core concepts. And I think that was ultimately my biggest takeaway from the teachers this way: understand the core concepts and their functions, and you'll be able to be a strong programmer regardless of the language you're using.

8/18/2019

Week 2

This week was definitely tougher than the first for me, but that's to be expected. I'm starting to run into the issue of having so many elements that I technically know how to use individually, but when I incorporate them all together I don't always know where everything is meant to go. For example, one of my biggest things I'll be reviewing a lot in my own time is the

difference between for, forEach, for in, and map. I do understand the uses of each of them looping through arrays in order to either transfer into a new array or change the elements in the current array. But it's tough to really understand which cases each one is best used for, and I'm sure that will just come with continued practice and problems to work through. A big takeaway this week is for me to be aware that challenges are meant to be challenging. That might sound silly to say, but this week I found myself getting disappointed in myself for not completing some of the challenges after some of our assignments this week. When I was reflecting at home one night this week, I had a realization of "hey wait a minute, I grasped the important concepts today and executed them correctly! Just because I couldn't complete the challenges today doesn't mean today was a failure." And I'm sure it's the sort of thing where, as I learn more and become more confident, I can come back to some of these assignments or bigger projects and attempt the challenges with a more knowledgeable perspective. It's also important to keep reminding myself that I really just started learning this brand new skill TWO WEEKS AGO and I already feel quite confident with so many aspects: defining and using variables and integers, how to create an object, how to create instances of a class and put methods into that class that I can then use on those instances to change them or manipulate them in some way, creating functions that can store huge chunks of code that I can reuse later without having to type the whole thing again, and incorporating loops into any of the things I've listed above in order to keep going through them (and breaking out of loops in a functional way instead of just using the "break" command). I literally didn't even know most of those things existed two weeks ago and I'm already getting a solid grasp of their functionality and use cases. So I definitely need to be careful about judging

myself too hard at the start because ultimately I've already accomplished so much, and that's something to be excited about!

8/25/2019

Week 3

I think this week was a great indicator for my future in the program now that I see how I feel about moving into a new language. I've been curious since I started to know whether or not I would feel comfortable transitioning into different languages. But when we started python this week, I was so comfortable picking it up because I already had such a solid grasp of the core concepts we had learned through javascript. It was just so cool getting to see the way everything builds! The concepts we learned throughout one week in javascript (variables, integers, concatenation, strings, while and for loops) were concepts we learned in the first two days of python! And I feel like I didn't have to skip a beat to pick up these concepts in a new language, which is an incredibly exciting feeling!

One of my favorite things from this week was the team project I did with Jack. I was VERY nervous initially just because I know myself and I know that talking to brand new people is not a strong suit of mine. But once we got talking, I felt that we really clicked and it was fun getting to work through coding problems with another person. I found that simply talking through my own code out loud to another person was sometimes enough to solve my own problem that I was trying to figure out. This was also a very fulfilling assignment on a personal level because I've never felt like someone who can take initiative in a group situation and delegate certain tasks to people. But with this project, it came very naturally for me to say

“Okay, let’s look at the problem. What pieces do we need to break it down to? Okay we have that. Do you have a preference on which part you’d like to do? Alright so you’ll do that and I can do the other part.” And when either of us were struggling to figure out our own next step, we felt comfortable working through it together. I’ll be totally honest in saying that I was very slightly tearing up a bit at one point because I was struck with such happiness that this confidence and comfortability was coming so easily to me in this environment. I feel like that’s a great indicator that I’m in the right place for me.

As far as improvements or just personal critiques for this week, and every week so far, sometimes I wonder if I need to do a better job of speaking up in class when questions are asked. I want to make it clear that I’m engaged in class and engaged with the material, but it is often difficult for me to open my mouth sometimes even when I know the answer. I think I can do a better job at forcing myself to raise my hand every now and then even if I’m uncomfortable. The only way to eventually be comfortable is to force myself to be uncomfortable for a minute.

8/31/2019

Week 4

I started off my past week by reviewing my weekly projects we’ve done so far. I pulled each one up, looked at the instructions and didn’t look at my previous code, then I just tried to redo the whole thing with a new perspective. The week one project was probably the most interesting because there were certain lines of code I was reusing a lot on my first try, but now with new concepts and new perspectives I was able to implement it differently. I used functions

to fire those lines of code whenever I needed them. I think this review was pretty great for me, and also it was just a reminder to stay on top of previous concepts and languages so I don't forget them too quickly as we move on to new things.

One of my biggest challenges this week I think was the group assignment I did with Chris. Chris and I's brains just work differently because I tend to operate more quietly, and sometimes I felt slightly overwhelmed by the energy Chris was giving off. There was a point when she continued on to the challenge part of the assignment before I was done with my part of the main assignment, and by the time I caught up to her she was already trying to implement the challenge. At that time I had no idea what she was doing or what this piece of code was doing and I didn't know how to help. It was just an error of communication that I might know how to have a better grasp on in the future. And of course I take this challenging assignment as a learning experience because in the real world I can't always choose who I'm working with. Sometimes I will have to work with people who work from differently from me, and it's up to me to know how to work with different types of people.

Overall, I'm feeling great this week! I felt like our first milestone assessment (or whatever you guys are calling it) went quite well. I was able to finish the whole thing within the time given. I got stuck on one problem because I couldn't figure out how to reverse an array. So I skipped that problem and made sure I could finish everything else first. Then I came back and it was suddenly easier because some of the later problems gave me some ideas on how to work it. Python is still coming pretty easily for me because so far we're handling concepts we're already familiar with from javascript. Oh and I just remembered as I was typing that that I'm supposed to reflect on the article we read as well. I thought it was pretty interesting and it does make sense.

We don't learn anything by trying to implement our own original ideas first. Relating it to a world I'm more familiar with: no composer has ever tried writing a piece of music without first listen to a lot of music and finding what inspires them and what structures are interesting to them. Learning how different tonalities work and experimenting with atmosphere and structure is something composers do regularly throughout their learning process. In the same way, I suppose it would be pretty insane for me to say "I'm gonna build a brand new program without first seeing how a functioning program is structured." Copying can be a great way to understand the structure and flow of something, and once you fully understand something's structure then you're more capable of experimenting with that structure and finding your way to fully original ideas! So I'll definitely take that advice into consideration as we learn more in terms of fullstack developer skills.

9/8/2019

Week 5

This was definitely my toughest week so far. The more design-oriented concepts of HTML and CSS don't click with me quite as much as the functional concepts we were grasping in javascript and python. But I definitely warmed up to it a little more by Friday. Our Google assignment for the weekly project was really successful for me! Maybe my code was sloppy and the overall page wasn't laid out in the most efficient way possible, but it's week 1 of HTML/CSS so I know those refinement type things are going to come with more practice. But overall, this week was definitely a training session in "don't beat yourself up too much if you don't get it yet" for me.

As far as personal goals go this week, I decided to make a little bit of headway on my potential passion project this weekend. An idea I'm considering is a music-led meditation app. The user will be able to select from a list of different tonal centers (that I'm creating in a synthesizer tool I like to play around with from time to time) as well as choose a time limit for their meditation session. Throughout the course of the user's chosen time, the music will play and transition between the chosen tonalities. The music will fade out toward the end of the time. The idea is a meditation app that will allow the users to fully immerse themselves in meditation without worrying about checking the time or setting an alarm that will take you out of meditation too harshly. This will gradually fade you out of it in order to keep that light feeling you achieved during the meditation itself. My plan will definitely change and evolve as I learn how all these elements will ultimately interact with each other, and as I learn what I will actually be capable of by the end of this program. But this is a general skeleton thus far. And this weekend I started building some of my tonal centers as well as a VERY general mock-up of the homepage using what I learned with HTML and CSS this week. I'm definitely feeling hopeful about what this could become if I really put the time and work into it!

9/19/2019

Week 6

This is a rather late reflection, but I'll try to keep it just as in depth as the rest. Last week was definitely the toughest so far. We're really starting to get into the meat of the front-end development world. It's exciting stuff because I'm starting to see how everything links together to make all the apps and websites I interact with on a daily basis. And with enough practice and

understanding, I can make those types of websites myself. But at the moment it's just tough. When bringing HTML, CSS, and Javascript all together, it's often difficult to keep things straight and truly only do what's absolutely necessary in each respective program (layout in HTML, design in CSS, and actions and events in Javascript). Luckily I'm not feeling discouraged from this past week. I mostly feel excited about the potential of what it really means to put all of this together in the end. This current week, we're making our own portfolio sites and it's really coming together! It's hard to believe that I didn't even know 90% of this stuff existed 6 weeks ago. So for that, I'm incredibly hopeful.