title: **Studying for tech interviews**
num_comments: 13
num_up_votes: 44
upvote_ratio: 0.98

Post Text

I'm so frustrated. I finally got the motivation to start reviewing ds/algo (algoexpert) and practice
problems but I feel like my stupid brain can't absorb what I'm studying. I feel like I have this brain fog
and nothing is stimulating me. It takes me hours to complete one problem on leetcode (more on this below).
Can you guys give me some tips on how to deal with this? Some notes * I've been diagnosed with ADHD
within the past 2 months but my psychiatrist doesn't believe me and refuses to even consider the possibility
of me having it and thinks that Welbutrin (which I was already on for a while) will solve my problems. So
for now, I don't have access to any stimulants. **Should I look into nootropics? Has anyone used them and**
found success? *** So to stop myself from taking hours to solve a problem, I'm starting to build the habit**
to look at the hints and solution if I can't solve it after 30-45 min and use spaced repetition to deeper my
understanding/familiarity with the technique/approach to solve the problem. But sometimes I still catch
myself taking too long anyway. * **Should I build data structures from scratch to strengthen my**
understanding of them? **I had a mock interview on deep copying doubly linked lists and since I haven't used**
them for so long, I completely tanked.   The bolded are the questions I would like answered. Thanks for
reading through this and helping me out.

Comments

Commenter_2
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 21
I've wasted money on various nootropics in the past and it didn't help me that much. I actually recommend
caffeine (which is technically a nootropic) + fish oil + magnesium l-threonate. It won't be anywhere near
prescription stimulants but it does help.

Are you a new grad? It is normal to feel lost at first. Practice does help a lot.

    ###### Commenter_3
    ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
    Good advice. One other thing you could add to caffeine is MCT oil. For me, it makes the stimulation
    even better.

Commenter_4
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7
So, I have an opinion.. take it with a grain of salt.

I think algorithms, sorting functions, link list code challenge are endless.. god. Seriously fuck all that.
They're not bad or wrong, but it's an absolutely pointless endeavor to know how to do all those things and
never actually get to do them on the job.

What I think is most important, is being good at structural code. Understanding frameworks like MVC, or
MVVM, etc (I know those aren't super DS related). writing code that meets the expectations of these
frameworks is paramount. When you can do that quickly you can spend more time focusing on the individual
algorithm that yields the best results.

Avoid the endless rat race of algorithmic perfection. Or, ya-know, don't. There are cases for both these
types of people in the world. I -for one- am not interested in having wide knowledge of algorithms, I care
mostly about practical/functional code that gets me to the point where I have a chance to one day discern

and implement an algorithm optimally.

Commenter_5
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 8
> What I think is most important, is being good at structural code. Understanding frameworks like MVC, or MVVM, etc (I know those aren't super DS related). writing code that meets the expectations of these frameworks is paramount. When you can do that quickly you can spend more time focusing on the individual algorithm that yields the best results.

I absolutely agree with this. The problem is that many companies' interview processes don't. If you're like me, and you do much better with real world problems than LC puzzles, then, be sure to seek out companies that use real world problems rather than LC puzzles. Interviewing sucks enough already. There's no need to be a masochist about it.

Commenter_4
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 8
I've never really thought about it before, but it kinda feels like companies that interview like this are just straight-up toxic. Ego driven megalomaniacs someone (not me might say)... Don't get me wrong, efficiency of an algorithm is of ***paramount importance,*** but obscure testing of specific algorithms -completely out of context of usage- is just a straight up ego trip. 99% of software engineering is supporting and maintaining the boilerplate code the sits in front of one or two powerful algorithms/routines. I would (and now will) avoid any interview that targets this kind of knowledge as a priority over practical good programming practices and knowledge. Ie, how do you handle errors? How do you invert this dependency? How do you ship code? Are you familiar with any common software design patterns? Have you ever worked in a SOA?

Commenter_5
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 14
First of all, find a different psychiatrist, if you can. Medication isn't everything, but, for me, it's a *huge* help. I literally won't do an interview without taking Adderall beforehand anymore.

If you're currently interviewing, caffeine and/or certain supplements may or may not help. And, although I can't really advise you to do anything illegal, getting a couple pills from a friend might help, too.

Speaking of "currently interviewing," I would suggest starting with companies that are lower on your preferences and using those interviews as practice. There are also a couple of sites online where you can do mock interviews, some of which are free, IIRC. Definitely take advantage of that.

As for LeetCode, I have these suggestions:

1. Look for companies that use more real world problems in their interview process. They are out there, trust me.

2. If you haven't already, get the 1 year subscription to LeetCode. It's worth it, even if you're not currently interviewing. I think it comes out to less than $15/month. I don't know about you, but I think a LeetCode subscription is worth at least as much as a Netflix subscription, and that's about what the standard plan on Netflix is.

3. If you have a target company or companies in mind, filter the list down by questions used by those companies, sort either by frequency or by topic, and work your way through that. Otherwise, work through the Blind 75, or any other "top questions" list in whatever order floats your boat.

4. Don't let yourself struggle for 45 minutes if you're not making progress toward a solution. Typically, 45 minutes is what you have to do the whole problem in an interview setting. You want to be on your way to a solution in 20 minutes or less. If you're still struggling after 20 minutes, then look at the solutions.

5. Implementing some data structures "from scratch" in Python or other dynamic language is not a bad idea.

6. If you're not getting anywhere with medium and hard problems, focus on easy problems until they become second nature. You should be able to literally just write down the solution of any easy-level problem, whether it's listed on LC or not. You should be able to reason your way through most medium-level problems to get a solution that works, if not optimally. Practice is what will get you there.

That's it. Feel free to hit me up with any other questions. Good luck on your interview prep!

Commenter_6
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6
I am kind of in the same boat and struggling with interview prep. Let me know if you are looking for an accountability buddy to keep going.
Also get a different psych, meds help.

Commenter_7
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7
I struggled with all of this before I had my stimulants. After getting on them, my brain fog cleared up and after a few weeks of struggling with basic problems, things just clicked and made sense. Idk how to help you but I'd try really hard to get stimulants prescribed to me. I'm wondering why you can't change your psych? Have you seen ads for those ADHD online help providers? If you're in the US, check out Circle Medical

Commenter_8
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
Who diagnosed you with ADHD if not your own psychiatrist (and that he doesn't agree with the diagnosis)?

    ###### Commenter_9
    ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
    Primary Care physician or a neuropsych evaluation. I highly recommend the neuropsych, you get a lot more insite than a standard ADHD test. Found out that I have particularly bad auditory attention issues. Not something easily figured out on your own, because you don't know what your missing.

Commenter_10
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
My 2c:

1. no
2. don't set hard limits on your time like that. spaced repetition is important but also allowing for some flexibility to your approach will free you to think more creatively
3. practice using questions that are as similar as possible to what you expect to be asked. spend most of your time on that since it's the most efficient way to approach the problem you're trying to solve (preparing for interview questions)

Commenter_11
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
!remindme 2 days

    ###### Commenter_12
    ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I will be messaging you in 2 days on [**2022-01-31 22:48:09 UTC**](http://www.wolframalpha.com/input/?i=2022-01-31%2022:48:09%20UTC%20To%20Local%20Time) **to rem** you of [**this link**](https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD_Programmers/comments/sftmbr/studying_for_tech_int erviews/hus0ang/?context=3)

[**CLICK THIS LINK**](https://www.reddit.com/message/compose/?to=RemindMeBot&subject=Reminder&message=%5Bhttps%3A%2F%2Fwww.reddit.com%2Fr%2FADHD_Programmers%2Fcomments%2Fsftmbr%2Fstudying_for_tech_int ews%2Fhus0ang%2F%5D%0A%0ARemindMe%21%202022-01-31%2022%3A48%3A09%20UTC) to send a PM to also b reminded and to reduce spam.

^(Parent commenter can) [^(delete this message to hide from others.)](https://www.reddit.com/message/ compose/?to=RemindMeBot&subject=Delete%20Comment&message=Delete%21%20sftmbr)

*****

[^(Info)](#)	[^(Custom)](htt ps://www.reddit.com/message/compose/?to=RemindMeBot&subject=Reminder&message=%5BLink%20or%20mess inside%20square%20brackets%5D%0A%0ARemindMe%21%20Time%20period%20here)	[^(Your Reminders)](https:/ .reddit.com/message/compose/?to=RemindMeBot&subject=List%20Of%20Reminders&message=MyReminders%21) eedback)](https://www.reddit.com/message/compose/?to=Watchful1&subject=RemindMeBot%20Feedback)