How To Get The Most Out Of Your Coding Interview Practice Sessions

When you start practicing for coding interviews, there's a lot to cover. You'll naturally wanna brush up on technical questions. But *how* you practice those questions will make a big difference in how well you're prepared.

Here're a few tips to make sure you get the most out of your practice sessions.

Track your weak spots

One of the hardest parts of practicing is knowing *what* to practice. Tracking what you struggle with helps answer that question.

So grab a fresh notebook. After each question, look back and ask yourself, "What did I get wrong about this problem at first?" Take the time to write down one or two things you got stuck on, and what helped you figure them out. Compare these notes to our tips for getting unstuck (/article/unstuck).

After each full practice session, read through your *entire* running list. Read it at the beginning of each practice session too. This'll add a nice layer of rigor to your practice, so you're really internalizing the lessons you're learning.

Use an actual whiteboard

Coding on a whiteboard is awkward at first. You have to write out every single character, and you can't easily insert or delete blocks of code.

Use your practice sessions to iron out that awkwardness. Run a few problems on a piece of paper or, if you can, a real whiteboard. A few helpful tips for handwriting code:

- **Start in the top-left corner.** You want all the room you can get.
- **Leave blank space between each line of code**. This makes it *much* easier to add things later.
- **Slow down.** Take an extra second to think of descriptive variable names. You might be tempted to move faster by using short variable names, but that actually ends up costing *more* time. It'll make your code harder to debug!

Set a timer

Get a feel for the time pressure of an actual interview. You should be able to finish a problem in 30–45 minutes, including debugging your code at the end.

If you're just starting out and the timer adds too much stress, put this technique on the shelf. Add it in later as you start to get more comfortable with solving problems.

Think out loud

Like writing code on a whiteboard, this is an acquired skill. It feels awkward at first. But your interviewer will expect you to think out loud during the interview, so you gotta power through that awkwardness.

A good trick to get used to talking out loud: **Grab a buddy.** Another engineer would be great, but you can also do this with a non-technical friend.

Have your buddy sit in while you talk through a problem. Better yet—try loading up one of our questions on an iPad and giving that to your buddy to use as a script!

Set aside a specific time of day to practice.

Give yourself an hour each day to practice. Commit to practicing around the same time, like after you eat dinner. This helps you form a stickier habit of practicing.

Prefer small, daily doses of practice to doing big cram sessions every once in a while. Distributing your practice sessions helps you learn more with less time and effort in the long run (https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/summer-2002/ask-cognitive-scientist).

Want more coding interview help?

Check out **interviewcake.com** for more advice, guides, and practice questions.