This journey into the "Become a Developer in 10 weeks" world of education has been exciting and enlightening for me. I understand that some people have caveats about this model, and I do as well, but what I've discovered so far has been really interesting and worthwhile and it all starts with the interview process.

While similar to job interviews, these interviews were unique and, for me, kind of fun. All the interviews I had were over Skype or something similar like Google Hangouts. They range from 30 minutes to an hour and from what I can tell, are probably the most important part of choosing a school, and getting them to choose you.

So, the first part of the interview is the pre-work. Sometimes this is required for the interview, other times it's just recommended. Some schools will even send you links to the pre-work for the entire course to look at, but don't expect you to finish it before the interview. In my experience, all the information I was sent was extremely useful. Links to books, online schools and challenges all helped me develop my skill in different ways. In many ways, I thought this was the most useful aspect of applying to many schools.

As I talked about in a previous post, Launch Academy (my choice) had me build a simple webpage and put it online. Other schools had me complete some codeacademy.com courses or read certain books (my least favorite). Fullstack Academy out of New York requires you take an online Ruby quiz before the interview. This was probably the most challenging of the pre-work. There are five questions to answer in 60 minutes. I felt comfortable on the first three and not on the last two even with my very basic understanding of Ruby. The question I remember most was to write a ruby program that would tell the angle between the hands of a clock at any given time.

The essential thing about the pre-work is to do more than asked if possible. You want to stick out, and doing the bare minimum is probably not the best indicator of a successful student. Not only that, but as I said, if the goal is to become a web developer, everything you do will bring value and is worthwhile.

Now, onto the actual interview, some schools will give you a little overview of what will happen, others will say prepare for anything. But, they all follow a similar pattern. First is just a normal get to know chat. Anything you've written in your application can be used as a starting point. This part is pretty standard fare. Then you will have to answer the questions about why you want to become a web developer and why you think you can. It's best to be completely honest, but there are certain things I believe they are looking for.

The first question is the easy one, this should be something you've had your heart set on and you should be excited about the prospect of building web apps and putting them on the Internet! The second question is a little more complicated, and from my experience I think I can grasp what type of person they are looking for. Firstly, any professional accomplishments are seen as good indicators of success. Also important is persistence and logical ability. Beyond this, and what is more interesting, is there seems to be a draw towards people who have a demonstrated creative side as well. Playing an instrument is looked kindly upon. Writing and crafts are seen as plusses.

This seems to be (from what I've learned so far) a direction that the entire computer development community is leaning. I like to think of it as the "enlightened nerd." And for these schools, this is the optimum type of student. I think the reasoning behind it is that the reality is that even after taking one of these boot camps, you will not be a great coder, and probably not even a good one. However, if you are an enthusiastic and driven individual, the holes in your coding ability can be overlooked. Basically, it's easier to learn how to code than it is to learn how to be a good employee. So, in the interview it is beneficial to push the outside the box side of your intelligence.

The analytic side may be harder to show off anyway. But not to worry, you will always receive some sort of quiz in these interviews. There are two basic types, IQ and Ruby. The Ruby quizzes are often easier as long as you have a basic understanding of the commands. The IQ quizzes are more fun, but sometimes very challenging. You will always be asked to talk about your thinking as you go through a problem (something that, for me, made it more difficult to get through quickly) and you will always be advised that getting the right answer isn't the most important, they just want to, "see how your brain works."

Some of the questions are even more like personality tests. Questions like, "if you could save one of these three (insert anyone) people from certain death, who would it be and why." That's slightly hyperbolic but not too much.

As for the IQ questions, my favorite (although I failed to completely solve it during the interview) was this: "You have two cubes in your desk and you want to use them to keep track of the day of the month. What numbers would you right on each side so that you could display the correct date every day." Give it a shot. It has a few levels but the solution is actually pretty satisfying.

For these tests there's pretty much no way to prepare for them. Best to just be relaxed and take your time, use pen and paper and go through it. Getting them wrong does not mean you won't be offered a place in the school.

The IQ test and personality profile are what set these interviews apart from a standard job interview. (Job interviews I believe are seeking the same answers but, by law, can’t be as blunt.) Best way to succeed is just relax, and if necessary, practice talking with a friend via Skype to get comfortable with the technology. Many of these schools say that a small percentage of applicants get into the school (anywhere from 10% to 35%) although in talking to an instructor I found that those figures might be massaged a bit, so don't be intimidated. For me, they were different enough, and the interviewers were fun enough that my initial nerves were always quelled quickly and I ultimately ended up having a pretty good time.