EVERYDAY
LIFE

A few words...

Despite what the title says on the front cover, I, unfortunately, lead a busy life. That's not to say I work 12-hour shifts or hate my job but there are times when work (and sometimes school) can become stressful and moments like that are when I feel like I need an escape.

As such, there are several things I enjoy doing in my spare time, some just for fun, others as a hobby. That said, I thought I would use this assignment as an opportunity to share activities I enjoy and find interesting at the same time.

—Manuel

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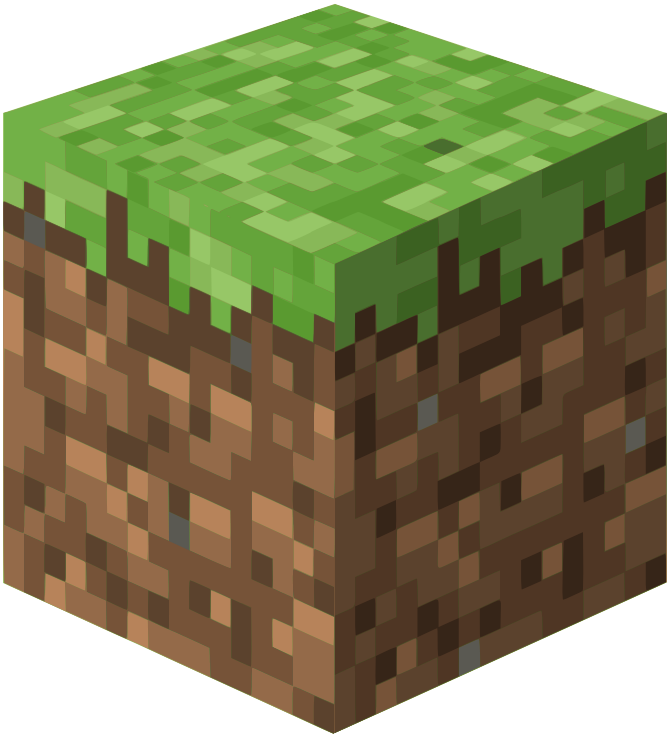
Minecraft

Created in 2009 by Markus "Notch" Persson as a Java program for personal computers, Minecraft is a sandbox game whose focus is on allowing the player to explore, interact, and modify a dynamically-generated, blocky three-dimensional map. The game has since been ported to other platforms, including iOS, Android, and PlayStation 4, to name a few, and as of 2020, sold over 200 million copies worldwide.

I first bought my copy back in 2014 and I've had the opportunity to not only watch the game grow and add new features but also make friends across different servers (not that I couldn't in real life). At some point down the road, I got tired of playing vanilla Minecraft and decided to look into Forge, a modding platform that allows additional textures, items, and mechanics to be added or changed to the game. I'll admit, it did take some time getting used to because not only did you have to navigate to the program folder and study its file structure but you also had to make sure you knew how to troubleshoot problems that came up during the game because the community can only help you out so much before throwing in the towel. In the end, I'd say it was worth the trouble as Forge helped to re-create the spark I had for the game.

Currently, I run a small modded server with my friends where the goal here is to try and survive whatever the world throws at us, whether it be the harsh weather, hostile mobs, or some third thing all while trying to create a sustainable livelihood.

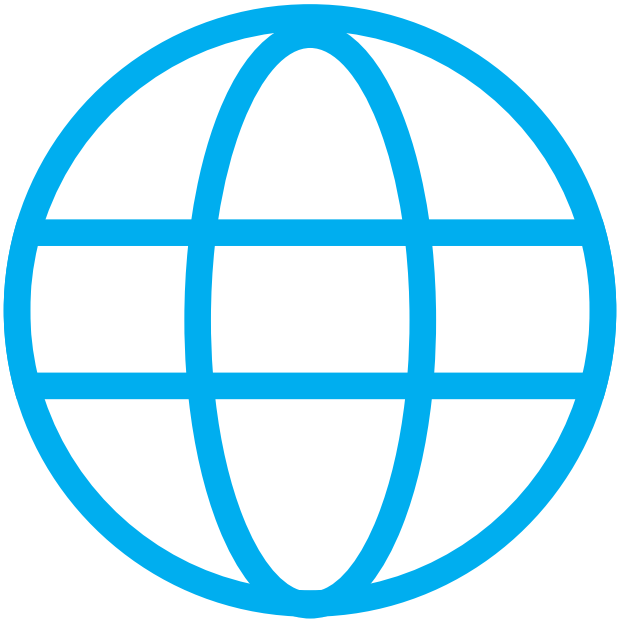


WEB DEVELOPMENT

Before taking the senior project course sequence, I never thought about making web development one of my career choices, mostly because I thought it was something you had to be artistically talented in, especially if you're working with CSS. But after taking CS460 (and later CS461 and CS462), I grew to like the idea of it overall.

The part that drew me into web development was being able to create interactive elements on web pages capable of sending, receiving, and displaying data, especially in JavaScript where you don't have to reload the page to see the changes.

As I'm wrapping up the school year, I'm thinking about spending some of my free time to explore other web frameworks like Angular and ReactJS, not that I don't like working with ASP.NET, but I'd rather not stay in the ecosystem forever and try out new things every now and then. Aside from that, I'm currently working on a private project with three other people which I'm hoping takes off someday.



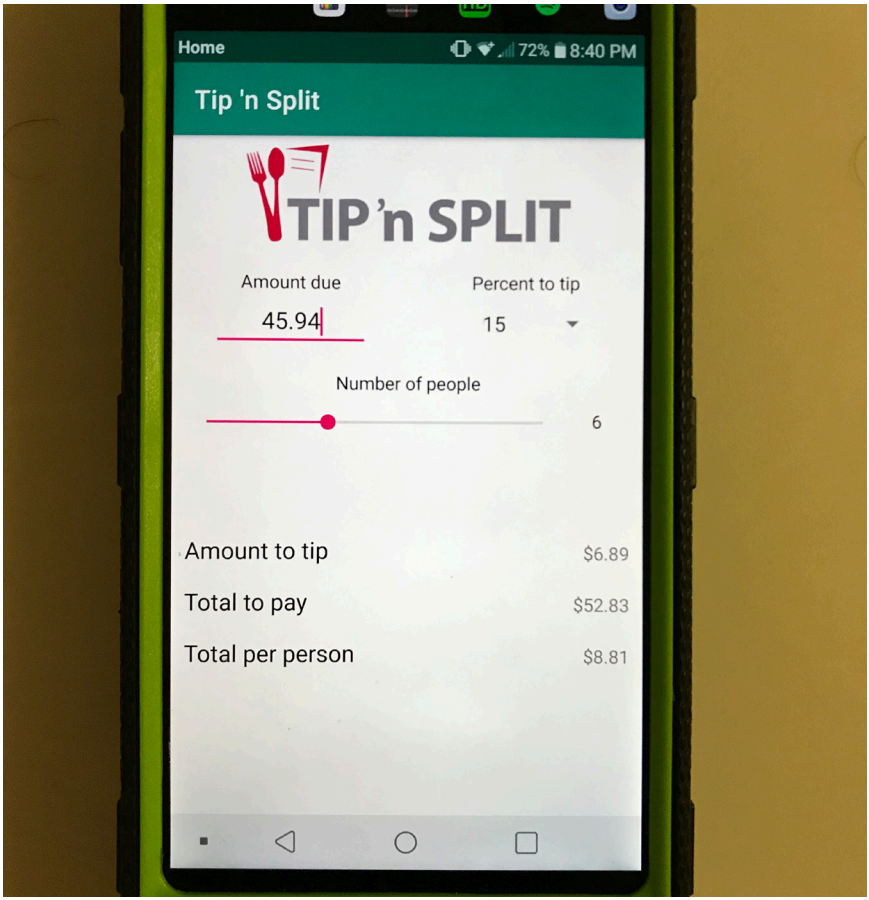
MOBILE APP DEVELOPMENT

I've always had an interest in mobile app development, whether it be for Android or iOS devices. Unfortunately, I didn't know where to start and I noticed Western didn't offer any courses in mobile app development besides a 100-level elective that makes use of MIT's App Inventor (formally Google App Inventor), which I didn't find all that interesting because it's mostly drag-and-drop and it hardly takes advantages of advanced features, such as a customized UI or the ability to talk to a database, to name a few. However, that all changed when I found that a 400-level seminar for Android development was being offered last term (Winter 2020). Although the course touched on several things, especially the topics I mentioned earlier, we weren't able to cover all the features that Android had to offer given the 11-week constraint. But even then, I found it to be quite an interesting experience and an enjoyable one.

The photo on the next page is a basic tip calculator app I made on my first assignment. Even

though it has a few bugs I need to iron out at some point, it was something I can cross off from my bucket list.

Now that I have the knowledge and tools needed to create an Android app, I'm currently working on sharpening my skills by writing user interface code, something I still struggle with since the beginning of the course and hope to soon overcome. Besides that, I'm hoping to one day write an app that will complement our website I mentioned a few pages ago.

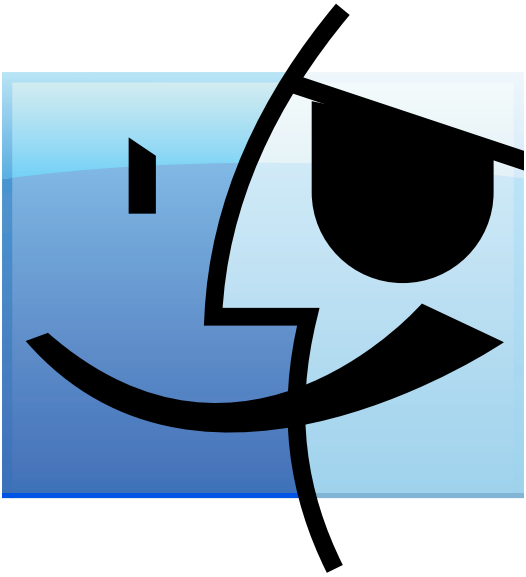


Hackintosh

As the name suggests, “Hackintosh” is the name of a computer that runs the macOS operating system on computer hardware not authorized by Apple. That said, I’ve had the opportunity to build it several years ago which ran on Mac OS X Mountain Lion. The installation process was a success overall. However, there were a few problems with my setup, one of them being that whenever I closed my laptop, it would continue to keep running, sometimes to the point where it would become too hot if I put in my laptop bag. Another one would be if I installed an update, the operating system would become unusable because any custom system files that were installed would be wiped out. Because I had little to no knowledge of how all this worked at the time, I simply gave up and it probably wouldn’t be until several years before I pulled it off once more.

Given I was working with a different laptop (with different internal components) this time around, the installation process was a little more difficult. Part of it was because I didn’t have a compatible Wi-Fi/Bluetooth card installed at the time and the other part was because I chose to do a manual install rather than use a pre-built macOS image from a website that in my opinion would cause problems down the road. In any case, I was able to complete the install after tinkering around with it for a few hours.

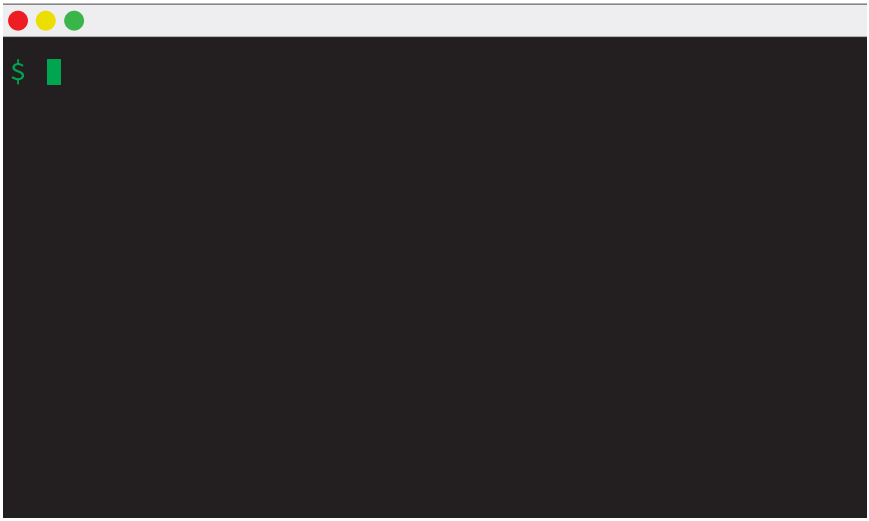
Even though I don’t condone piracy in any sense, the reason I got into “Hackintoshing” was that there was something unique about how the macOS environment works overall compared to Windows and Linux that I had to explore. That and I wanted to take on the challenge to see if I could successfully install macOS on my machine, which I did. However, as I’m writing this, I have a few bugs that are currently present I’m looking to address, such as scratchy sound, blank picture via HDMI, and certain keyboard functions such as the up and down volume and brightness keys, all of which I’ve turned into a hobby that I find interesting and educational at the same time.



THROWAWAY PROJECTS

From time to time, I'm always looking for a way to sharpen my programming skills, especially if I haven't worked with a certain language (or languages) in a while. One way I've been able to do so is by writing up what I call "throwaway" projects, programs that serve little to no purpose other than keeping my mind fresh.

Typically what happens in these small projects is I come up with a scenario to solve and then try tackling it in various programming languages. Unfortunately, none of these programs that I build ever make it to Github because I don't want to clutter my profile with trivial code, but I am actively looking for a way to do so without drawing attention away from my other projects. Problems I enjoy solving are small-scale applications like a banking program as well as mathematical problems from algebra, trigonometry, and so forth.



Gardening

Something I never thought I would take up on is gardening. Initially, I only got into it because of how the coronavirus pandemic was taking a toll at my local grocery stores, especially as lines at the entrance grew very long and food prices were on the rise. But over time, I began to like the idea of raising my plants that I would watch them grow every day from my window.

Unfortunately, with the recent periods of heavy rain that's occurred in my area a couple of times now, some of my plants have died as a result of overwatering, at which point I decided to move my plants closer towards my window so that the balcony above my apartment shields them from the rain and so they don't become waterlogged in the future.

So far, it's been nearly a month since I started gardening and it looks like my hard work is paying off, now that the pepper plants are blossoming in the pink bucket.