Requiring packages as dev dependencies is a way to maintain a nice separation between the code you intend to go out to production and the code that is really only meant for development purposes.

When you are adding features to your application, you should first ask yourself whether other developers have likely solved this problem before you, and then you should check Packagist to see whether there's a package that can simplify the development of your feature. This will make you much more efficient as a developer, as you will not be spending time writing code that's been written time and time again by other developers, and can focus on the code that makes your project deliver value. The cost of developing software is more than just writing code; you have to test the code and maintain it. Making a habit of using open source solutions can save you countless hours of development time in the long run. Simply search according to the keyword of the functionality you are looking for, or by the name of the package if you know it.

Autoloading is a term that refers to programmatically automating the inclusion of classes and functions external to the file you are working in. Without it, our code would be littered with **include** or **require** statements. PHP offers a function, **spl\_autoload\_register**, that accepts a function to do your autoloading for you, but Composer makes it even easier than that.