# Career Reflection

It was only by the time I had graduated high school, and the clock started to tick louder, that I decided I would pursue a career in UX/UI design and web development. I had nothing but an idea, and I found myself grasping for a sense of direction and structure. I enrolled at Reading Area Community College where I worked towards getting an associate degree in Computer Information Systems with a plan to transfer to Albright for a co-major in Computer Science and Visual Communications. I also decided I would pick up a Digital Media minor while I was at it.

Over my education I came to the realization that there was more to pursuing my future career than I thought. I became overwhelmed by all I had yet to understand about actually attaining the job. Now that I had started my 3rd year in my (hopefully) 4-year college journey, time is running out. Thankfully, *Skill-Up: A Software Developers Guide to Life and Career* helped clear some of my uncertainty so that I could begin to formulate a (albeit still pretty rough) more structured plan.

In *Skill-Up*, Jordan Hudgens uses his own experience to provide guidance and practical tips to optimize your time as an aspiring software developer. He shed light on concepts I had never even considered before like industry. Knowing I wanted to go into UX/UI and web development, it was obvious that I’d go down the front-end route, but I never thought about where that route would take me. Sure, I can design sites and applications, but for who? I may consider free-lancing or choose to work for small-midsized companies that match my values. I’d want to work for people who aim to make a positive difference in their community, be it global or local. I will use this to start but ultimately will probably go for whatever is available and fulfilling.

# Skill Development

The tips found in *Skill-Up* were helpful to understand what I should be looking out for and how to react. There are a number of suggestions to be found for developing the skills and the mindset necessary to succeed. Boiled down they equate to building a good work ethic and be persistent in personal improvement to maintain an edge over the competition. I really appreciate the real-world examples and practical tips provided by Hudgens such as which languages to learn and how and when to learn them and how to combat perfectionism (which I have always struggled with).

Of the skills listed in *Skill Up* which I didn’t give enough credit in its role as my future as a developer is conversation. Hudgens not only outlined the importance conversation skills will have in my career, but also provided pointers on how to improve the skill. The tip that resonated the most with me was to not complain. I interpreted this mostly as a call to exude positivity and to be a reason people smile. I think about the people in my life who I believe to be the most social and they all have joy which they want to share with the world. They inspire me to be a better version of myself in my work and in my personal life which is what I aspire to be for others.

Once I have developed my conversation skills, I will use it in to help me develop a community presence, another skill I will have to work on. Using and contributing community resources will help not only myself, but many likeminded developers in the field. At the moment, I would not even know where to start in finding valuable resources. By the time I will be satisfied in the navigation of these digital communities, I will be able to identify useful resources and have no trouble finding them.

Another skill I am embarrassed to still have underdeveloped is my ability to code in different languages proficiently. As a web developer I am comfortable with HTML and CSS but that’s it. I have learned C++ and SQL my first 2 years of college, but I haven’t used them since to keep the skills sharp. Hudgens recommended a developer to learn a language/ framework a year which I intend to do. The most urgent coding skill I aim to acquire is JavaScript which I plan on using W3 Schools to learn as it’s a platform I am familiar with.

In order to better acquire languages over the years, I will need to learn how to study. Hudgens has supplied the reader with multiple suggestions to maximize studying effectiveness like using the Pomodoro method which I think will do well in motivating me due to its point system. Hudgens also warns against multitasking which I have also been exploring the effects of in my Digital Literacy class.

# Overcoming Challenges

A common problem I’ve faced in my life, especially in my academic ventures which I expect to translate into career is finding the willpower to do my work. I was vaguely aware of the decision economics explained in *Skill-Up* but Hudgens’ take on it was a much-needed reiteration. I appreciated the examples of how Hudgens applied the value of preserving his willpower into his personal life. While I don’t think I’ll be wearing the same outfit every day, I will be adjusting my behavior to account for having more energy and willpower in the morning.

I could pick outfits in the evening for the next day for example. I will also most likely be saving high-priority high-difficulty tasks for the morning after I feel refreshed from a full 8 hours of sleep and a filling breakfast.

Hand in hand with low willpower is the tendency to procrastinate. When I lack the willpower to finish my work, I push it off as explained in *Skill-Up*. I found guidance in the book, however, that will help me curb the maladaptive habit once and for all. My favorite tip is to break tasks into smaller ones which has helped me even in college. The tasks become much less intimidating when they are smaller and more specific. Suddenly, even the most daunting of tasks becomes attainable.

Another procrastination hack Hudgens imparted was Stephen Guise’s one push up a day. This wasn’t an idea which I had come across yet, but it makes perfect sense. I imagine if I dedicated myself to write even one line of code a day, I’d rarely leave it at just that. Often times, the hardest part of following through with something is to start. It only makes sense that making starting as easy and as accessible as possible would remove much of the resistance I feel.

# Career Strategy

I will continue to sharpen my skills in college until I feel comfortable enough to go out into the field. I will make the most out of my education by enhancing my formal education with the tips found in books like *Skill-Up*. I plan to develop a routine of reading daily. Right now, I focus on reading for pleasure to develop the habit but soon I plan to shift towards reading for growth as I get closer to being in the field. In reading for growth, I will choose material which engage my intellect and inform me about the field.

Another aspect of the daily routine is to apply my skills in making projects daily. Ideally, they will be challenging and engage me in complex concepts I have yet to master. I will use the methods learned throughout *Skill-Up* to make sure I actually follow through with forming these habits and building the routine. I will have to beat my tendency to procrastinate by addressing my perfectionism and fear of failure that have held me back for so long. I will employ motivation and willpower techniques like the Pomodoro system and starting off with small commitments to myself so as to build some momentum.

From there I will build my voice as a creator either within a company or with my clients. I plan to maintain an internet presence for personal projects or even for finding clients. I hope to build a community around each other’s work and continue to exchange ideas with others. This will also be a good opportunity to show off not just my technical skills, but also my soft skills like writing and conversation.