

Lesson

Tuesday

Introduction to Programming

(/introduction-to-programming)

/ Git, HTML and CSS (/introduction-to-programming/git-html-and-css)

/ Homework: Journaling at Epicodus

Text

This lesson outlines the journaling curriculum at Epicodus. We'll cover exactly how, when, and why you'll journal.

Journaling at Epicodus

Every course section you'll have a brief journaling assignment in addition to your coding homework. Here's how it will work:

- The weekend homework at the start of a new course section includes a journaling prompt.
- You're expected to write a brief response over the weekend.
- You'll discuss your response with a partner at the start of the next class session.

Keeping a journal and engaging with this curriculum is optional. However, it is highly encouraged that you do engage, since our journaling curriculum has many benefits as we'll discuss next!

Purpose and Benefits

Some may be surprised to learn a technical bootcamp requires such a non-technical activity. But here's the deal: The vast majority of students don't come to Epicodus *just* to learn how to code. They come to learn how to code *in order to begin a new career!* **But successfully launching a new career in tech requires more than just coding skills.** We find graduates are most successful in navigating the job search process and finding satisfying employment when they possess the following:

- A thorough, reflective understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and passions to help determine the best positions for them.
- Resumes that clearly depict how past experience is related to the new position they're applying for (even if that past experience wasn't in the tech industry!)
- Cover letters that convey their authentic, multifaceted personality, and highlight why they're a great technical and culture fit for a team.
- An understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and how to convey them positively in an interview.
- An awareness of the personal narrative they want to depict, and an understanding of how to convey it.
- Soft skills necessary to succeed on a team, and the ability to demonstrate those skills to interviewers.
- Clear goals and trajectories.

So, while our technical curriculum will prepare you for the *coding skills* necessary for your new career, these journaling prompts and other soft skills exercises will prepare you for these non-technical considerations in changing careers. We'll also use the content recorded in our journal to later construct our cover letters, resumes, and other materials.

Journaling Mediums

It is up to you where you keep your journal. You are welcome to write in a physical notebook, but we also recommend a digital notebook that allows you to practice your typing and easily search for keywords across pages. Here are some resources to consider using:

- **VS Code.** Yes, your code editor can also be used as a text editor! You can write in markdown, if you like, and you can install extensions that spellcheck.
- **Your computer's word processing software**, like Apple's Pages or Microsoft's Word. Most computer comes with a basic and free text editor.
- **An online word processor**, like Google Docs (<https://www.google.com/docs/about/>). This solution is popular because all of your data is saved in the cloud and can be accessed on any computer that has an internet connection. You do need to create a free account to use this service.
- **Productivity software**, like Notion (<https://www.notion.so/>). This solution also saves your data to the cloud, and it gives you additional tooling. You do need to create a free account to use this service.

Prompts

Prompts will ask you to either reflect upon previous weeks, set goals, brainstorm ways to achieve them, identify areas for improvement, and/or record aspects of your Epicodus journey. Example prompts include things like:

- *Think about how you work through a tough programming problem. Is there anything about solving a difficult task that frustrates you? Are there patterns of behavior you've learned that make solving problems more or less difficult?*

- *What are three things about you that you wouldn't want to leave an interview without telling the interviewer? (This could be something about you as a person, experience, skills, anything!) How might you convey this to them?*

Responses

You'll write a response to the prompt **before the first class of the course section**. Don't consider yourself the journaling type? Don't worry. You're not required to write pages of extensive narrative. In fact, you're not required to keep a journal at all, though we at least recommend thinking over the prompt for discussion during class. At a minimum you only need three things:

1. A **timestamp** denoting when the entry was recorded, like *"Intro section 2"*.
2. A quick **paraphrasing of the prompt** for your reference later. Like *"Three things I want interviewers to know"*.
3. **Brief, thoughtful answer(s)** to the prompt. Spend several minutes thinking critically and recording honest, thoughtful answers, but we don't require those answers to be verbose or extensive. A few short sentences or bullet points are fine.

But this is your tool for recording your journey. You may certainly make longer, more narrative entries as you find productive and meaningful.

In-Class Discussion

In the first class of every new course section, before coding you'll spend a few minutes discussing the prompt and your response(s) with a partner. Depending on the prompt, there may be specific discussion questions, or you may simply be asked to share a little about what you wrote.

Other Journal Content

You're welcome to record other helpful info in your journal too. To do lists? An awesome programming tip from a co-student or instructor? Notes you took following along with homework? Go for it! This is your space.

Privacy

One last note: We fully recognize that a journal can be a private space. And we want you to feel comfortable recording all aspects of your journey with honesty. As such, **we'll never require you share anything you you're uncomfortable with in class discussions. And you'll never be asked to hand in your journal for an instructor to read.** We simply encourage you to paraphrase and discuss parts of your responses you *are* comfortable sharing, especially as they relate to the Epicodus student experience.

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