apprentice.io

Chapter 1

Welcome to apprentice.io!

We're excited to have you here. This packet contains information that past apprentices have found helpful.

We recommend looking through it now and referring back to it later. Think of this packet as your Hitchhiker's Guide during your apprenticeship. Don't Panic!

This packet is available at https://github.com/thoughtbot/apprenticeship. Feel free to file a pull request to improve any aspect of it, no matter how tiny.

Chapter 2

The Plan

Your first two months are spent learning. At the end of your second month, you'll meet with your office's Managing Director to discuss your promotion to a thoughtbot developer or designer.

If either you or we have decided that thoughtbot is not for you, no worries. We can work with you over the next month to help find job prospects.

Don't worry! We will do everything we can to make your three months as amazing as we can and prepare you for your step after the apprenticeship.

Your mentor

Your first mentor’s name is: _____. You’ll get a new mentor each month.

This person is your guide for the month.

How am I doing?

You will meet with your mentor once a week on Friday to talk through your progress.

You are encouraged to create a list of the goals you have for your apprenticeship on an overall basis as well as to maintain a weekly list of smaller, specific goals. You should work with your mentor to set these and track your progress against them.

For an example of how previous apprentices have done this, see the apprentice-goals project on GitHub (https://github.com/thoughtbot/apprer goals). You should consider forking that repository to contribute your own goals.

When you switch mentors, you will have a Mentor Hand-off. This is a meeting with both mentors to talk through the previous month and the plan for the next month.

Pairing during the week

You will work with your mentor on client projects Monday-Thursday, traveling with them to the client site if appropriate. Your mentor will pair with you during the week as you work on user stories.

Pairing is the fastest and most effective way to learn, so it should be a priority for you and your mentor. However, do not expect to pair 100% of the time. One particularly effective method of pairing is Ping-Ponging. The idea is for Person 1 to write a test, Person 2 writes the code to make the test pass. Then Person 2 writes the next test and Person 1 writes the code to make the test pass. Rinse, repeat.

We also encourage you to pair with other apprentices (designer/developer teams work great) as well as with thoughtbot employees who are not your mentor. Everyone on the team loves teaching and learning, and they'd love to teach and learn from you. A good way to do it is to announce during standup that you're looking for someone to pair with, and if people have free time (usually only Fridays, since that's when everyone gets a break from client work), they'll tell you.

Self-guided learning

Whenever appropriate or applicable to your work, you should take time away from client work to do some self-guided learning. This can include reading material from books, attending workshops, or learning about and trying out a technique or library.

For reading material, we recommend starting with Apprenticeship Patterns, which is available in the Library folder in the thoughtbot Dropbox.

Workshops

We encourage learning. We sell workshops and webcasts (both on http://upcase.com), which are free for you. You can and should take advantage of these.

Ask your mentor to add you to the thoughtbot team in Upcase.

Chapter 3

Getting the Most Out of apprentice.io

Expectations

Your apprenticeship is an opportunity. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it.

There is some structure to guide you through the program and also people available to help you along the way, but the engine of this experience is your effort. Learning should take up some of your evening/weekend time.

You should expect this to be a mentally intense period of your life where you are learning a great deal. Hard work pays off.

Breakable Toy

A Breakable Toy (http://redsquirrel.com/dave/work/a2j/patterns/BreakableToys.html) is a side Rails project you are excited/-passionate about.

This project should be an anchor to your learning, allowing you to raise new questions and a place to apply new skills/techniques. To get the most out of it, you should put the code in Github and give your mentors and apprentice cohort access to the project. You should also deploy it to Heroku.

There is no expectation for other apprentices to contribute to your project, but everyone should have access and input is welcome.

A team that has a designer apprentice and a developer apprentice has worked very well for both designer and developer in the past. Don't be afraid to ask if someone wants to work with you!

Investment Days

You should use investment days to work on open-source projects, or internal thoughtbot projects. For a list of ideas, you should look at the **Apprentice.io Projects** Trello board (https://trello.com). As always, if you don't see it there, ask your mentor for help.

Feedback

It’s not easy, but you should get comfortable asking for and receiving feedback. People are nice and none of it is personal. It’s a great way to develop professionally.

Chapter 4

Tools and Weapons

Laptop setup

Your mentor will help you get your laptop set up. We recommend the laptop script available at https://github.com/thoughtbot/laptop.

Dotfiles

Dotfiles are the files in your home directory (referred to as "~) that start with a dot, like"/.bashrc". They are used to configure various programs, e.g. "~/.vimrc" sets some global options for Vim. Take a look at thoughtbot's dotfiles (https://github.com/thoughtbot/dotfiles), and feel free to fork them. We also encourage you to check out your coworkers' dotfiles for inspiration. For example, Josh Clayton has an extensive configuration for tmux in his dotfiles: https://github.com/joshuaclayton/dotfiles/blob/master/tmux.conf.

Logins

We use many different websites at thoughtbot, and everyone should have accounts for them. Having access will make it much easier for you to participate in thoughtbot's internal conversations.

The list of services is below. By the end of your first week, you should have access to all of them.

Google apps

URL: http://google.com/a/thoughtbot.com

You should have received an email with your email (NAME@thoughtbot.com) and email password.

We use the calendar extensively - add someone else's calendar to keep track of what other people are doing.

Dropbox (http://dropbox.com)

You have access to the "Library" Dropbox folder. This folder contains workshops, books, papers, and other resources that we've purchased in the past and now share with everyone at thoughtbot. It's an easy way to learn something for free.

GitHub

Your GitHub account should have access to private thoughtbot repositories such as our blog (robots.thoughtbot.com). You should also have access to your client project. Work with your mentor if you do not have access.

Slack

We use Slack (http://thoughtbot.slack.com) *constantly*. Slack has many rooms, each with a specific purpose:

- general: discuss things that interest everyone. You should be in this room whenever you are working.
- dev, ruby, xcoders: discussions of code. When asking a question, pasting your code is encouraged.
- design: discuss design topics or cool designs that you've encountered.
- catrs: funny links and off-topic discussions.
- san-francisco, boston, denver, raleigh, philly: Location-specific discussions, like lunch.
- Most of the other rooms are specific to projects and are named after the project.

Both designers and developers should check out both the development and design channels - everyone's welcome in every channel.

Basecamp

Basecamp (https://basecamp.com/1719045) is where we put ideas that we want to discuss, like product ideas or a new Git workflow. It's also the home for our general company policies, non-technical discussion and company announcements.

You should have access to the "Everyone" Basecamp project, which is company-wide, and a project for your specific office. You may also have a Basecamp project for your client work, depending on the client.

You should have received a Basecamp invitation in your thoughtbot.com email. If you any trouble accessing it, talk to your mentor.

Constable

We use Constable (https://constable.io/) for announcements specific to certain interests, and may eventually replace Basecamp. You can login using Google authentication with your thoughtbot email.

Trello

Most of our client and internal projects use Trello boards for project management. If you don't already have a Trello account, you can log in using your apprentice.io email. Your mentor should help you get access to the boards you need. You should have access to the Trello board (or other project management system if appropriate) for your client project and also several internal thoughtbot boards (Development Discussions, Research, Apprentice.io Projects, robots.thoughtbot.com, etc.).

Chapter 5

Community

Part of your apprenticeship is learning to be part of a development community. This could be a Ruby Meetup Group, company, or project team.

Meeting people is easy

We are a friendly bunch and we'd like to get to know you better! That being said, it's easy to feel intimidated or uncomfortable in a new environment. Some things you should try:

- Go on coffee walks: we often have informal "coffee walks" at 3-ish, where people go for a walk (coffee optional) and chat about random topics.
- Go get lunch/coffee/breakfast with anyone in the office.
- Suggest a social event for your project team.

Friday Lunches

We order lunch for the whole office each Friday! Please let our office manager know if you have any allergies or dietary restrictions.

Who?

If you’re having trouble matching names to faces, check out http://thoughtbot.com, which has pictures and names of everyone at the company (except apprentices). Slack avatars also tend to be handy in this regard.

Development Discussions

The Boston office holds weekly development discussions in the upstairs conference room from 1-2pm. Upcoming topics for discussion are listed in Trello (https://trello.com/b/Ldgkk0rY/development-discussions). Boston development apprentices are strongly encouraged to attend and participate.

The San Francisco, Denver, and Stockholm offices have similar discussions. Check with your mentor for information.

Boston.rb

The Boston Ruby Group (bostonrb.org/calendar) meets every other Tuesday, alternating project nights (where people hack together) and presentations. It's a great place to learn something, as well as to practice your public speaking by submitting a talk. Speaking at Boston.rb is great practice since it's a smallish, friendly audience, and it gives your resume a nice bump.

The Boston.rb project nights are hosted at the thoughtbot office, which makes them very easy to attend.

Chapter 6

Improve apprentice.io

We encourage you to propose changes to the apprentice process, including hiring, onboarding, and anything else that you think could be better. Everyone at thoughtbot is constantly trying to do a better job and we welcome feedback.

As an apprentice, you have much better insight into what could make the process better for you than does someone who's been working here for five years.

Feedback is always, always appreciated on everything at thoughtbot. If you have feedback on the overall apprentice program, please contact Gabe Berke-Williams, the head of the apprentice.io program.

This page is intentionally left blank. Please write down interesting things you've learned, tips, and areas where apprentice.io could improve. We encourage feedback on apprentice.io and thoughtbot.