The Other Side of the Table

An Interviewer's Tips for Getting Your First Dev Job

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A Reassurance

What *aren't* we looking for?

What we're not looking for:

- A huge breadth of knowledge
- A huge depth of knowledge

If you're applying to a junior position, we're not looking for you to be a genius or an expert yet. That'd be unrealistic!

What we're not looking for:

- Memorization

I'm not going to tell you to not prepare for whiteboarding or problem-solving interview questions, because I know a lot of companies still do them. Needing to look stuff up occasionally is normal for engineers across the seniority bands!

What we're not looking for:

- Super-specific ways of solving problems
- Knowing that hot new framework

If you're really interested in learning a particular framework or way of writing code, heck yeah! But every workplace has their own opinions about the stack; don't feel like you need to lock yourself into the new hotness or something you've seen talked up.

What we're not looking for:

- Any specific credentials

The great thing about going into development is that a lot of places don't care what your background is as long as you can do the work. Whether you're a bootcamp grad, self taught, or have a college degree in a related field—don't feel like you have to apologize for yourself or where you came from.

What we're not looking for:

- Willingness to spend all waking hours on code

Also, again, there's nothing wrong with passion, but we're also not looking for people to burn themselves on the pyre of the work. Having healthy, well-rested employees with outside lives that enrich them is in everyone's best interest.

What *are* we looking for?

What we're looking for:

- Clear thought process, communication

As a junior, it's not just your tech skills that matter. Coming into a new workplace, you'll need to be comfortable asking questions and explaining what you're doing. If an evaluation exercise isn't perfect or 100% finished, it's a good save to talk about your thought process & next steps.

What we're looking for:

- Attention to detail and good judgment on what matters

There's no shame in asking what your evaluators consider the most important things to focus on. I've seen a lot of people spend most of their time on converting a design to a react application when time would have been better spent elsewhere.

What we're looking for:

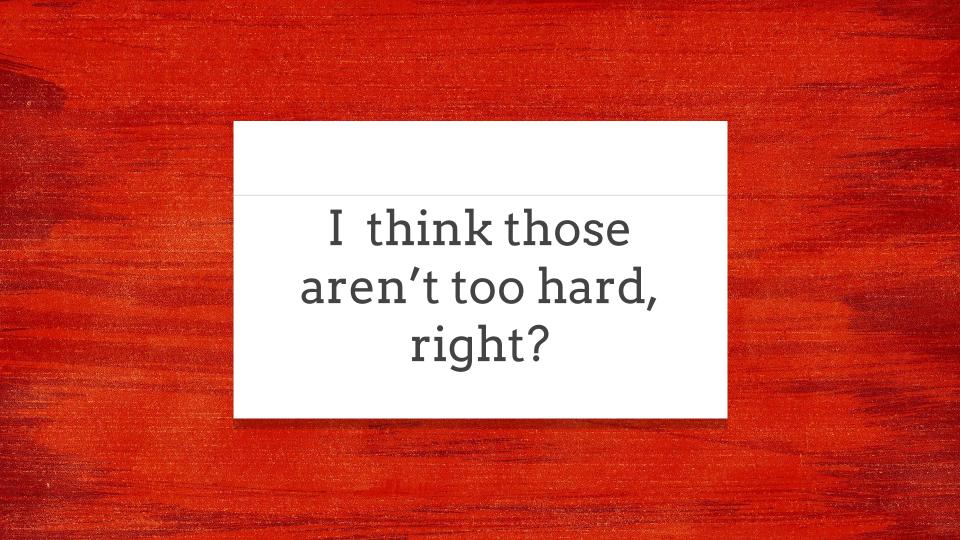- Pretty good to strong basics in your part of the stack

The things I consider basics: HTML/CSS and some javascript for front-end; general knowledge of control flows, variable assignment, creating functions in the programming language we're working in.

What we're looking for:

- Ability to pick up new paradigms and techniques

I consider part of the junior job responsibilities to be learning! Is someone going to be a good learner and mentee? Are they open to trying new stuff?

A few things to really not do (that have happened, really!)

- Fall asleep in the interview
- Insult the kind of work your interviewer does
- Throwing former employers or colleagues under the bus
- Being significantly late and not acknowledging it or apologizing for it
- Not knowing anything about the company
- Making assumptions about the interviewer

I think those aren't too hard, right?

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If you don't get picked, don't get discouraged—if you're being considered at all, it's not that anyone thought you were bad, just that the timing wasn't right or that there were a lot of good candidates.

Last tip:
Bring your best self :)

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