

During the Hackathon

You're at a Hackathon. Now what?

1. Depth over Breadth

Hackathons are designed in a way where making a perfect product is impossible. As a result, getting stuck on small details or trying to perfect every functionality can cause more harm than good. Rather, try focusing on what *really* makes your idea stand out. What makes it different from what already exists? Why should the judges care about it? Prioritizing answering these questions and narrowing your scope can help polish what your focus and end result can be.

2. Learn While You Do

If it's your first hackathon, chances are your ideas may feel like they exceed your skill level. However, this is very normal, and that doesn't mean you should give up. Hackathons are also meant to be a very valuable learning experience where you can figure out what you already know and what you need to learn in order to accomplish your vision. Doing research such as watching videos, following tutorials, or reading documentation can help you take you through each step you get stuck on. Similarly, most hackathons may have mentors onsite specifically for support, so don't be afraid to ask for help.

3. Time, Time, Time

Hackathons are very short. They're usually over a single weekend, and most of the time you stay working overnight. By the end of the hackathon, you may feel drained or burnt out. To prevent this, it's important to pace yourself on what you want accomplished and plan ahead. If you're working in a team, it's very important that everybody knows who's doing what. As time passes, make sure that you have some sort of plan in mind that makes sure you stay on track. If you find yourself running out of time near the end, focus on polishing on a few key features that truly matter. And don't forget to take care of yourself-- taking breaks, eating or drinking water, or even taking a quick nap can help you function better when you truly need it.

4. Presentation Matters

Most hackathon judges won't look at your code. As a result, make sure that you can communicate what your project is trying to do and why it's important. Even if your project doesn't completely work as you wished, showing what the project is intended for and how it could work in theory can be just as important. As hackathons are so short, judges don't typically expect to see a complete working project. So, be sure to prepare a polished presentation, and leave a good amount of time near the end dedicated to making sure your project looks the best it can be.

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