**Introduction**

My name is Chris and I run HackSchool which digital skills training centre. The focus currently is more on creative tech YouTube, Instagram and Twitch. My background, however, is in software. I was a senior software developer for 20 years and still do a bit now and then.

So, the emphasis of this will be more on being a coder\*, but many of the things I say apply to tech jobs in general.

\*A coder is someone who programmes language into a computer, so it behaves how you want it to.

Here are my two websites

<https://www.hackschool.co.uk>

<https://www.hacktv.co.uk>

**Qualifications in tech jobs**

I’m a self-taught programmer. Most coders are. Coding is unusual as qualifications are not as essential as they are in other professions. A popular new approach is digital bootcamps. These are short 3 month courses which are a quick way of figuring out whether coding is right for you. Showing dedication to learning your craft and keeping up to date with the latest developments will make you a successful coder.

**Experience matters**

If you want to employ a bricklayer, you’d probably ask them to build a wall. This would tell you whether or not they were a good bricklayer. It is the same with coding, SHOW people you know how to code.

You may not have had a job but there are lots of ways to demonstrate experience such as coding projects, a blog or YouTube channel about your projects. You can also do things like volunteer to do some tech for your school or a small local business. Imagine you have a family member who is a self-employed hairdresser, you could design a website, find free hosting, do some photography and video for their social media. Perhaps you could do some PHP on the website if it’s a WordPress site.

**Softskills matter**

Softskills are personal skills that allow people to interact effectively with other people in the workplace. They are very important to becoming a coder.

**Good verbal and written communication skills:** People with poor communication skills are difficult to manage. They misunderstand what they are supposed to do and get things wrong. Or don’t explain what they are going to do, and the finished product isn’t what you or the customer want. If you are weak on these it is something you need to work on. I have a friend who a senior project manager for LFC who is dyslexic. The job involves lots of emails and it is something he works hard at. For instance, he will video conference and phone people rather than email them.

**Enthusiasm or “passion”:** As it is a self-taught profession, employers use this to gauge if you are good at self-learning. They want to see someone who does something for its own sake and doesn’t need to every task explained to them in a lot of detail. An employer will look for things like hobbies or things that you have done which did for fun. These things don’t have to be technical. A hobby like playing guitar in a band shows focus and discipline. It’s also a fun thing to talk about in an interview. Independently doing things that require focus and hard work will reflect well.

**Resilience and determination:** Most employers, especially if they are an entrepreneur\*, will believe you learn from failure not success. So, a willingness to repeatedly fail at something until you get it right will be seen as a good thing.

**\***A person who sets up their own business

**Strong interpersonal skills:** Remember, coders are well paid and in demand, the last thing you want as a manager is other coders refusing to work with someone, or staff leaving the business because someone is difficult to work with. This does happen, HR people will tell you that sometimes petty differences can mount up over time and affect team performance. Strong people skills and interacting well with others will mean you are the kind of person who won’t let this happen.

Here are some resources that talk about how to get into tech. They don’t all agree with me.

**Coders**

**Joshua Fluke: Self-taught vs Bootcamp vs College. Which Is Right For You?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAlwZe-UrDY>

**Stephie: Becoming a Self-Taught Developer**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRrza-FHLD4>