

The 5 habits of a true programmer

By Maher Baker

“You might not think that programmers are artists, but programming is an extremely creative profession. It’s logic-based creativity.”

— John Romero

I've been a programmer for more than two decades. There's something about programming that I've always loved. After 20 years of writing code, I've identified 5 habits that made what I'm today. Looking at myself and my fellow programmers I noticed that we are all stuck to the same 5 habits, which indeed doesn't make it all a good ones, but as I say it's the way we do things.

If you're a programmer yourself, especially if you're a newcomer, you might want to take note of some of these practices, you may have the opportunity to improve or fix what is not good in it before you go deep in the rabbit hole.

#1: Daily work

Most programmers will find themselves in need to be working on their task(s), project(s), whatever they have to do every single day.

“Why every single day?” you ask!

“Why can't I just do it on my work days only?” you ask again!

I work 6 hours a day, Monday to Friday, I get rest and enjoy my day off, recharge myself, then start again the next Monday! You say!

Well, if you are a true faithful programmer you'll discover that even these large blocks of time that you imagine you have, is not enough to accomplish your task(s).

Simply: programming is an extremely creative process, even if did your research, planning, assignments, that doesn't ever means that everything will be OK and goes by the plan.

A truly programmer's mind work in a different way, sometimes you'll be stuck in one line of code for hours without knowing what is wrong just because your mind decided to stop processing for no reason, other time you'll find that your mind is processing faster than it usually does and you are enjoying it and just can't stop typing code!

In either way you'll find that 6 hours a day will be stretched to 8, 10 or more, leaving your office won't stop you of keep going, the day off will be the day that you can wear you slippers at home to keep typing code, whether you are enjoying or hating it.

“This is not the life I wished for” you say!

Working every day is what artist life look alike, after all as a programmer you are creating a piece of art, believe it or not you are an artist in somehow, when you start typing your first piece of code and your mind recognize it as a creation, it will not process as usual.

After a while you'll be saying: *“Who wouldn't want to work every single day? Who wouldn't want to create something new every day?”*

Sure in some days you'll stop working and try to enjoy your day by doing anything, anything you'll do will be connected to programming in somehow.

#2: Perfection

Actually what makes you work daily is seeking perfection, you'll never be satisfied of what you did whatsoever, you'll always want to write the perfect code and make a perfect app.

Your clients may love your work, but you'll look at it as something can be improved on and on, just keep in mind that this is an infinite loop.

You'll find yourself striving for a high standard of excellence, being a perfectionist actually undermines your movement because it prevents you from moving to the next task.

Remember versioning is in your side, of course that doesn't mean it's OK to leave bugs in your code, first you'll need to make your code work without any bugs and then you'll come back and make it perfect, even most experienced programmers can't create a perfect code that will be perfect in all time, life itself evolved.

“So do I seek perfection or not?”

Even if I or anyone else told you to not do that, as a programmer you'll always seek perfection in your work.

What I can advise you is stage it, do the core, make it work correctly then improve it.

#3: Copy & Paste

Fortunately it's legal now a days, it's called open source, in my time it was so hard to find someone to help you, each and every line of code I wrote was 100% my own pain, I had to write and test and retest and write again, I had to learn everything from scratch.

Today our community has expanded, you'll find thousands of programmers around the world are willing to help and assist you for free, a lot of them are providing codes and libraries for free.

“Can I copy others works?”

No, You can make use of others code to improve yours, not to just make it yours, look at other experienced programmers code and try to learn how they did achieved what you are looking to achieve, ask for their help when you need it.

Remember this will help you decrease time spent on coding and in somehow achieve perfection.

Try to always pay your debts.

Credit who helped whenever you can, help other programmer whenever you can.

#4: Learning

As a programmer you'll find yourself looking to learn everything about everything, whenever you see something new you'll start searching and searching to learn how did they did that, which is something not bad if you have time.

The real bad thing is not to practice what you've learned.

I bet you've heard that “practice makes perfect” and you've heard that “if you want to be good at something you must practice it” right? ... Wrong! Practice never makes perfection if you practice it in a wrong way, and if you want to be good at something you must learn about first then practice it well.

The main keys here are learning and practicing, learning will ensure you are practicing well, if you find what you've learned and practiced is useful for you, keep practicing it, otherwise forget about it and clear a space in your memory for something else.

Remember technologies varies and so other fields, don't stuck on learning about technologies, expand your knowledge to cover other things.

#5: Debugging

Programmer is used to debug his own code, which is normal and useful process, this process is the natural result of the type of our work, programmer type a code which sometimes may contains errors that need to be fixed.

The more programmer learned the more he seek perfection the more he spent time programming, again another loop is added to the programmers life.

Sometime debugging get out of the programmer matrix to the real life, Programmers will seek to discover errors in everything, in nature, in people in whatever they see, after all they used to do so, and the main problem will be the impossibility of fixing those errors which may lead of frustration.

Remember not everything in life is perfect, and not everything is fixable. Sometimes things are destined to work wrong.

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