General Programming Suggestions
Anthony Hornof - 10-25-2021

• Set aside large blocks of uninterrupted time for your programming. Remove all distractions.
• Use a large computer display. Be mindful of your ergonomics, such as your chair and keyboard. You should use the mouse minimally, and you should rarely need to look at your keyboard.
• Use an integrated development environment (IDE) that is designed to show simultaneously display all of the information that you need to do your programming tasks, such as to execute, test, and debug your code. Common tasks include, for example, being able to edit the code, compile, and see the results with as few keystrokes as possible, and while all of the source code and the system output are all visible side-by-side. You should not need to go back and forth between multiple windows that are overlapping each other. You should be able to see everything you need with eye movements alone. You should be able to set breakpoints and monitor the values of variables as your code executes.
• Have lots of authoritative reference reading material available, both digital and analog.
• Unless you have fully mastered a programming language, and have reached "guru" status, you should spend a lot of your development time reading about the language and its constructs.
• Keep an ongoing set of notes of your ideas, what you are trying to do, and design ideas.
• Keep a file of all of the little programming ideas that you tried along the way to figuring out how certain commands work, or of different coding ideas you had or tried out.
• Comment your code. Start your code by first writing the comments for what you expect to build.
• Save intermediary versions of your code, with a few notes that indicate what milestones were met with that version of the code.
• Thoroughly and regularly backup your work to multiple locations. At all times, you should be able to sustain multiple simultaneous and spontaneous hard drive failures or thefts, and lose no data.
• Limit your use of stackoverflow.com. When you identify a gap in your knowledge, seek guidance from established references and published books. Only after spending substantial time searching these materials (at least 10 minutes) should you consider using the web to answer your questions. If you do go to the web, use stackoverflow.com only to get ideas for how to solve your problem. But then go back to established references to read up on the ideas from stackoverflow.com.

   Please do not program one line at a time using stackoverflow.com to look up each line of code. This is not a good path to becoming an expert programmer. Expert programmers spend a lot of time reading established references, such as the official documentation for a language.

   Please understand that stackoverflow.com's business model is not to correctly answer programming questions, but to identify people who get "points" by quickly (though not necessarily accurately) answering questions so that stackoverflow can recommend these people to clients who pay stackoverflow to identify them.