

What to Expect as a New Software Engineer Part 1: Lessons You'll Learn in Year One

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Graduation day is super exciting for Launch Academy's newly trained software engineers! Your new career awaits, and you're confident you've learned everything you need to know to succeed as a professional developer.

Then you show up on your first day at your first job as a junior software engineer, and you can practically *feel* the record scratch.

What was I thinking?

Everyone here is better than me!

What am I doing?

No one will take me seriously!

Of course, your feelings are valid. But in all likelihood, those valid feelings are also completely unfounded.

You are ready, you are good enough, and you're going to thrive on your new career path!

To help you fully embrace the goal-oriented, problem-solving, game-changing mindset you learned at Launch Academy, we've put together a two-part series highlighting what you can expect from your first year in the coolest career you could possibly have chosen.

In part one, we'll look at the major lessons you'll learn in your first year as a junior software engineer, how you'll use the skills acquired at Launch Academy's coding bootcamp, and key takeaways from Launch that will help you thrive in your role.

The Top Two Lessons You'll Learn as a Junior Software Engineer

There's no way to adequately account for all the experiences you'll navigate during your first year on the job. But we guarantee you will get tossed into the deep end of these two learning pools, so pull on your big-kid bathing suit and get ready to swim!

Lesson 1: The codebase

As you learned at Launch Academy, a codebase refers to the source code of a program, component, or system. Within the codebase, you'll find everything you need to convert the programming language into a usable app, including the source files and configuration files.

As a junior software engineer, you may initially feel overwhelmed by the size and scope of your assigned project's codebase. This is the time to take a deep breath and remind yourself to put one foot in front of the other. "Slow-and-steady" is how you'll learn to navigate a large legacy codebase and become confident enough to make changes.

A significant part of your growth will require research and asking questions of the more experienced software developers on your team. And don't forget one of the most important instructions you received at Launch Academy:

Test every change before taking it live.

If you're intentional with your testing, you won't inadvertently introduce a change that dominoes into a truly terrible chain reaction.

Lesson 2: The workplace

Whether starting your first "real" job or entering a new career field, there's a great deal to learn about navigating a workplace as a professional software engineer.

What does it mean to "add value" to a project?

How do you establish precisely what's expected of you?

How will you develop beneficial coworking relationships so you continue to learn?

Meanwhile, you'll also be working with visual designers and product developers, so you'll need to learn to discuss the software with them. Remember, they likely do not have a tech background. Flex your empathy muscles and lean into a mindset of context, clarity, and collaboration.

Healthy work relationships can be the greatest asset in your new role.

Leverage These Launch Academy Takeaways to Thrive in Your First Job

Launch Academy students scale figurative mountains of information during our 18-week program, but there are two takeaways we hope you'll always return to when you're feeling stuck, stagnant, or uncertain.

Takeaway 1: Evergreen skills are for life

At Launch Academy, we teach "evergreen skills," skills that will serve you today, tomorrow, and in 100 years when you wake up from cryosleep.

The best thing about evergreen skills? You can invest in your evergreen skillset continually, leveling up year after year until you're the senior developer you admire so much today.

Does your company's codebase lack baked-in testing? Ask about adding unit tests!

Are you chomping at the bit to refactor a huge rat's nest of code? Grapple with it after hours to mitigate risk, then bring it to your team.

In other words, don't stop practicing the skills you've learned or learning new skills that are consequential to the work you're doing every day. At the end of your first year on the job, you'll be well-equipped to advance!

Takeaway 2: Curiosity keeps you relevant

We believe in teaching Launch Academy students *how* to ask questions so that they can effectively improve their skills. From day one, we use what we call the “question queue” to give students an opportunity to ask for help when they have a question or encounter a coding problem they can't solve themselves.

The question queue is part of our program's immersive experience—one that's designed to simulate the real-world work environment of a software engineer (consider it a simulated way of asking your manager for help).

When you ask a question, it's curiosity that leads you to the answer. So you build on your concept; you uncover more questions; you find more answers; and you build some more.

Just as watching workout videos doesn't make you any stronger, reading books about software doesn't make you a developer. You must show up, do your reps, and hone your form.

Similarly, you have to lead with curiosity over and over and over again.

Start with Launch Academy, and You'll Never Stop Learning

Learning new things is what makes life interesting, and Launch Academy does more than teach you new things; we teach you how to learn, so you can enjoy a long, fulfilling career (and life!) rich with newness.

In part two of this series, we'll shift gears and examine some of the *biggest challenges* you'll face in your first year as a software engineer—plus the major red flag all junior software engineers should watch out for.

In the meantime, do something NEW today. Book an informational call and get hire-ready in only 18 weeks!

