

Coding from zero

When I attended my first coding course [Awareness of Coding Tools](#), I thought that coding was for tech geniuses and IT experts. Four years on, I am an example of how anyone can learn to code.

I often viewed people who can code as being amazing at mathematics and never really thought anyone could learn it; I can barely do basic mental maths without using my phone.

First thing you might be wondering is why learn how to code in the first place when what I use works fine?

There are lots of benefits to using code, the main ones being,

- They make automating tasks easy, saving you hours in Excel
- Great community support
- Python and R are free so no need to pay expensive licenses

Coding skills are useful in any job role or grade, whether you are Administrative Officer or Grade 7, or working in Operational Delivery or as an Economist. There is always something that you can use coding skills for, whether you are producing graphs and reports, giving presentations, or looking for insights in your data.

My Background into Coding

I kept hearing people talking about R and Python and I was curious to see if I could learn how to code. I took the opportunity to apply for the [Level 4 Data Analytics Apprenticeship](#) which has modules on R and Python.

Common misconceptions about coding

Misconception 1: You'll become a good coder by attending a course

I really enjoyed these modules, they made me realise that coding is actually fun (when it works), the problem I had was that I expected to become an expert coder after simply attending the courses. Even after spending several weeks learning Python and R, I still felt like I didn't know how. It wasn't until I started actually using the tools that I began to feel more confident in my skills, and this happened when I was given my first problem to solve.

I must admit I would get stuck on something for days at a time and I would get annoyed when experienced coders would solve it in seconds. I kept thinking "Wow, I will never get to their level". It was really frustrating getting stuck all the time and not really knowing how to proceed or who to ask for help. It is so important to have a mentor or someone you can ask for help.

Across the Analysis Function, there are a number of ways to find help:

Misconception 2: You have to remember everything.

Another thing I realised after attending my first course was that there was just so much to learn and I wondered how I would remember it all. I thought I could just sit down and start writing code, but in reality you never really need to remember everything, most of the code is already available online and all you have to do is research methods online, and use documentation to understand how things worked.

Summary

I now work as a trainer, designing and delivering courses, and helping other people when they get stuck coding. The funny thing is, they often say “Wow, I have been stuck on this for days and you just solved it in seconds – I will never get to this level”. They don’t realise that the only way I can do this is because I too was stuck on it for days before and someone helped me solve it in seconds.

Learning to code is a journey that needs patience; sometimes things just work and sometimes you can spend hours trying to solve something.

The more you code, the more you learn, and there’s no end.

If you are interested to start your coding journey have a look at our wide variety of [Introductory courses](#).

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