

Re: interview question on primes

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Indeed. There is a very good argument made in this article: <http://tinyurl.com/yerwac> for giving an interview candidate some very simple programming tasks during the interview. The goal isn't to see how the person accomplishes any real-life tasks (which would be impossible to gauge in an interview timeframe), but just to see if he's fluent in the very basics of programming.

Such as the function of stacks, and the separation between the UI and business logic?

Can he write a `strlen` function? Can he write a function to tell whether a string is all caps? Etc.

Jesus, I am only an amateur C# programmer, but I really need some guidance on this. In real life, I would pull up the properties available for strings, and look for an `iscaps` property – which almost certainly exists – and a `count` method (definitely). One line of code, and probably entirely consisting of mouse clicks aside from typing the name of the input and output..

If you asked me to do it in VB, I would be pretty screwed. Even in VB.net, I don't know the syntax for strings, so even if I can use the same object call I don't know how to construct a string.

This would not, however, seem to preclude me from writing VB.net code. I am certain I could learn the syntax for strings pretty quickly – maybe even in 15 minutes, if the online help is good.

All this test demonstrates that the programmer operate in the IDE/language they use. Who picks it? If the person can pick their own, is a single C# call OK?

The thing to watch for is how **quickly** he writes the code. A superstar will be able to write such code about as fast as he can write. An inferior programmer will probably be able to write the code, but it will take much longer.

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Well, this would seem to be entirely a function of how familiar the user is with the syntax of the language used.

Nor am I convinced that writing code quickly is necessarily a good thing. The average programmer produces (it is widely believed) about 20 lines of production code in a day. Seeing if an applicant can do a day's work in 15 minutes is probably not a good index of real world productivity.

—Mark

Peter Webb

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