

Software Engineering

Technical Admissions Assessment (TAA) FAQ

General Information

- What is the Hack Reactor Technical Admissions Assessment (TAA)?

The TAA is an online assessment which Hack Reactor Software Engineering Immersive candidates are required to pass before being accepted into the program and beginning their precourse studies.

- What's the format of the TAA?

Each proctored TAA session is approximately 75 minutes long. Although up to twenty candidates may be participating, you'll be working on the assessment problems by yourself. A session consists of:

- A group introduction:
 - in a group Zoom room
 - 5 to 10 minutes
- Individual work on the assessment problems:
 - in your own recorded Zoom room
 - help from proctors is available
 - 55 minutes (timed)
- A group wrap-up:
 - in a group Zoom room
 - includes a question and answer period
 - 5 to 10 minutes
- Are there any restrictions on how many times or how frequently I can take a TAA?

Yes. In general, you may only attempt the TAA a maximum of 3 times and you are required to wait at least 2 weeks between attempts. For more details, see the "Booking Your TAA" section, below.

- How do I request accommodations for the TAA?

Galvanize is committed to providing students with disabilities equal access and participation in our programs as specified under applicable federal law. If you need accommodation for the TAA, please follow the directions in our Academic

Accommodations Policy document ([link](#)). Be sure to submit your request at least one week before your scheduled TAA.

- Do I have to agree to any specific conditions to take the TAA?

Yes. Before you start the timed portion of your TAA, you must agree to be recorded and not to share the TAA content. Specifically:

- "During this Technical Admissions Assessment, you will be recorded (screen, webcam video, and audio). We review these videos to help us make our decision. Do you consent to be recorded?"
- "We ask all candidates not to share any information about the content or structure of the Technical Admissions Assessment. It's really important—when people share it with their friends, there can be very bad consequences. We also ask that you don't copy or clone any of the material. Can you agree not to share information about or copy anything from this assessment?"
- Isn't there a one-on-one "Technical Interview"?

The TAA has replaced the Technical Interview that was given in the past. The TAA presents similar material in a different format. You will not be working one-on-one with an interviewer.

Preparing for the TAA

- Do I need to know JavaScript??

Yes. You must have basic JavaScript skills for the TAA. Even if you know other programming languages, if you don't have some familiarity with JavaScript, you are unlikely to be successful.

- What are the basic JavaScript skills I'll need to know?

We expect you to be skilled with:

- initializing, comparing, and operating on simple data types, including numbers, booleans, strings, and "undefined"
- composing, accessing, and manipulating arrays and objects (both literals and variables)
- using basic logic operators (not, and, or)
- using flow control (loops and conditionals)

- understand functions, including passing/using arguments, returning values, and scoping of function variables
- using console.log to validate and debug code
- using code blocks (braces) and indentation properly
- What else should I know?

You should know how to use JavaScript to solve problems, share your thought process, and demonstrate good soft skills. This includes being able to:

- develop a plan for solving a problem and articulate that plan out loud and/or through pseudocode
- avoid guessing and other undisciplined techniques
- avoid hardcoding for specific test data
- write clean code
- understand other people's (basic) Javascript code.
- strategize how to debug code that doesn't work
- respond well to new concepts and material
- communicate clearly and pleasantly with the proctors
- Should I memorize the usage of methods like .slice and .splice?

For the TAA, other than the .push method on arrays, you don't need to memorize the exact usage of methods. All TAA problems can be solved without using specific methods, except for .push and some methods that we might introduce and document in the TAA. However, knowing about some methods might help you solve some problems more elegantly and it's always good to know the most common usage of the most common methods.

- Do I need to be familiar with higher-order functions?

No, you don't need to be familiar with higher-order functions (functions that accept other functions as arguments or that return other functions).

- Do I need to know about ES6 enhancements to JavaScript, such as let, const, arrow function expressions, rest/spread, etc.?

No, but you're welcome to use ES6 (and newer) syntax if you know it.

- How can I prepare for the TAA?

There are many resources available for studying JavaScript and coding in general.

We recommend using our Hack Reactor self-guided Basic Prep course. You can learn more about it and sign up on our website here: [link](#).

- If I'm studying using the Hack Reactor Basic Prep curriculum, how many modules should I complete before taking the TAA?

We recommend that you complete Module 3 before taking your TAA. Make sure you understand the concepts presented and how to apply them.

- Do you have any sample problems?

You can find a couple of problems to test your readiness here: [link](#).

Booking Your TAA

- What's the process for booking a TAA?

To book a TAA, you'll need to go to the Galvanize Admissions Portal ([link](#)), then:

- Submit your initial application (if you haven't already)
- Complete the CCAT and typing test (non-technical challenge)
- Complete a coding challenge (if you haven't already)
- Book your TAA session

- What are the deadlines for taking the TAA before the next immersive start dates?

You can see the TAA deadlines on our website:

- Full-time Software Engineering cohorts: [link](#)
- Part-time (Remote) Software Engineering cohorts: [link](#)

Deadlines might be different for:

- Premium Prep students
- Scholarship applicants

- How far in advance can I book?

We generally show availability for the next three to four weeks. You can book any available session. If you'd like to book beyond the displayed availability, you'll need to wait until a new week is added, which normally happens on a Monday or Tuesday.

- Are TAA sessions offered every weekday?

No, not always. During busier weeks we might offer one or more sessions each weekday. During slower weeks, we might offer as few as three sessions total.

Rather than waiting for availability for a particular date, you should consider which week you want to take your TAA and book a session if it's available.

- How close to an upcoming TAA session can I book?

If a session is available, you can book up to 90 minutes before the start time.

- What if I don't see any availability for the time I need or want to take the TAA?

Check back in the Admissions Portal often to see if new slots become available. Availability increases as we get cancellations or add new sessions.

If you still cannot find a booking slot that works for you, please contact your Enrollment Advisor or email admissions@galvanize.com.

- How many times can I take the TAA?

You are limited to a maximum of 3 attempts. This includes all Hack Reactor or Galvanize Software Engineering Technical Interviews or Technical Admissions Assessments (TAAs). This is 3 attempts total, regardless of which campus you are applying to.

In some rare cases, we might allow an additional attempt, by special permission. Also, we will permit candidates a 4th attempt if it's been at least 6 months since their 3rd attempt.

Assessment attempts for our Data Science program are counted separately from attempts for the Software Engineering program.

- Should I take a TAA as "practice"?

We discourage candidates from taking a TAA as practice. Not only will you use up one of your attempts, but if you're unprepared, you might find the experience stressful, frustrating, or discouraging.

- How long do I have to wait between TAA attempts?

We require you to wait at least 2 weeks (14 days) between TAA attempts. If a candidate tries to take a TAA before 2 weeks have elapsed, we will not allow them to proceed (unless they have received special permission from their Enrollment Advisor).

We suggest you take the time you need to make sure you're fully prepared for your next TAA attempt.

- Can I book more than one TAA session at a time?

No, we ask that you have no more than one active TAA booking at a time. Multiple bookings are subject to cancellation.

We also ask that you wait until you receive results from a previous TAA before you book another session.

- What happens after I book a TAA session?

Shortly after you complete your booking, you'll receive a confirmation email with details about how to join your TAA session at the scheduled time. The email also includes information about getting your computer set up for taking the TAA.

In addition to the confirmation email, you'll receive a reminder email 24 hours before your scheduled session (if you booked more than 24 hours in advance). You'll get another reminder email 1 hour before your session. The reminder emails contain all the information that's in the confirmation email.

- What if I don't receive any confirmation or reminder emails?

It's very unusual for these emails not to be delivered. We ask that you check your "Spam" or "Junk" folder. Also, for Gmail users, check your "Promotions" and "All Mail" folders.

If you still can't find a confirmation or reminder email, please send an email to admissions@galvanize.com.

- What if, after filling out my application, I've changed my mind about which campus or start date I want?

No problem. During your TAA session, you'll have an opportunity to choose your new campus or start date.

- Can I take TAA even if my desired cohort start date is many months from now?

Yes, if you pass your TAA, it is valid for joining a cohort within 6 months.

Canceling or Rescheduling Your TAA

- How do I cancel my TAA session?

In your confirmation and reminder emails, there is a link to cancel your scheduled TAA session.

If you know you will not attend your scheduled session, please follow the procedure to cancel. This frees up your slot for another candidate to use and keeps us from waiting for you.

- How do I reschedule my TAA session?

To reschedule your TAA, follow the directions in your confirmation or reminder emails. The process requires first canceling using the link in the email(s) then rebooking in the Admissions Portal.

- If I wasn't able to attend my scheduled TAA session, how do I rebook?

If it is past the time of your scheduled TAA session and you didn't cancel in advance, you can usually book a new session in the Admissions Portal. In some cases, you might need to wait until 90 minutes after your scheduled session start time to rebook.

If you have difficulty rebooking, please please contact your Enrollment Advisor or email admissions@galvanize.com.

Setting Up Your Computer for the TAA

- What's the tech environment for taking the TAA?

You'll take your TAA using your desktop or laptop computer. You'll do all your coding work within our online Assessment Tool. This tool is described in more detail in the "Assessment Tool" section of this FAQ.

You'll also have the Zoom video conferencing software active. We require you to have a working webcam and microphone connected to your computer.

During the timed portion of the assessment, you'll need to share your screen within Zoom. Your Zoom session (screen, webcam, and microphone) will be automatically recorded to the cloud.

- Can I use a tablet or smartphone to take my TAA?

No, you will need a desktop or laptop computer.

- What computer can I use?

You can use a desktop or laptop computer running Windows or macOS.

Some candidates have had success using computers running Chrome OS or Linux, but we can't guarantee it will work.

- Does any software need to be installed on my computer?

Yes, you will need to make sure that recent versions of the Chrome web browser and the Zoom Client for Meetings application are installed.

- For the Chrome web browser, we require version 68 or newer ([link](#))
- For the Zoom Client for Meetings application, you must have version 5.2 or newer ([link](#))

- Can I use a web browser other than Chrome?

No. The online Assessment Tool that you'll use to take your TAA requires the Chrome web browser.

- Do I need a webcam?

Yes. we require that you have a working webcam connected to the computer you will use to take the TAA. The webcam can either be integrated or external (USB-connected).

- What if I don't have a working webcam or can't find one?

If you can't find or borrow a webcam, there are many apps that allow you to use an iOS or Android smartphone (or tablet) as a PC or Mac webcam. For example, IVCam, EpocCam, DroidCam, iCam, and IP Webcam. Note that we do not recommend or endorse any specific app for this purpose. If you decide to use one of these apps, please test it well before the start of your TAA session.

- Do I need a microphone?

Yes. we require that you have a working microphone connected to the computer you will use to take the TAA. The microphone can either be integrated or external (USB-connected). Most external webcams include microphone functionality, and some of the smartphone apps (mentioned above) offer microphone capability.

- Are there any special settings I need in order to share my screen in Zoom?

If you're running macOS 10.15 (Catalina) or macOS 11 (Big Sur), Zoom needs permission to share your screen. Before your TAA session, make sure screen sharing is working. For more information, visit here: [link](#)

- What if I have multiple displays?

It's fine if you have multiple displays. Please mention it to a proctor at the time of your TAA session. Before your session, please verify that you can share each display within Zoom (one at a time).

- Do I need a good Internet connection?

Yes, particularly for video conferencing in Zoom, you'll need a good Internet connection. Make sure that your Internet is reliable and that you will have strong Wi-Fi or a wired Ethernet connection.

- Should I test my setup in advance?

Yes, please! Well before your scheduled TAA session, check that your webcam and microphone are working in Zoom and that you can share your screen. If you can't get Zoom to work properly, try Zoom's Help Center here: [link](#).

You can try out the Assessment Tool using the instructions below.

The Assessment Tool

- What is the Assessment Tool?

The Assessment Tool is an online tool (web page) that you'll use during your TAA. The tool presents a series of problems that you'll work on. Within each problem, you'll be presented with a panel of instructions, a code editor panel, and a console output panel. You'll be able to write and run code within the tool.

Note that the Assessment Tool only runs within the Chrome web browser.

- Do I need to log into the Assessment Tool?

No. The Assessment Tool link in your confirmation and reminder emails is personalized for you specifically.

- Can I see what the Assessment Tool looks like?

Yes! You can familiarize yourself with a demo version of the tool by opening the following link in Chrome: [link](#).

- Can I change the size of the text in the Assessment Tool?

Yes. This is explained in the demo version of the tool.

- Is there a "dark mode" for the Assessment Tool?

No, the tool does not have its own dark mode. However, the "Dark Reader" Chrome extension ([link](#)) works well with the Assessment Tool.

Joining Your TAA Session

- How do I join my scheduled TAA session?

Your confirmation and reminder emails contain a link to the Assessment Tool. When you open the link in Chrome, you'll get a welcome message with further instructions and a link to the Group Zoom room.

You'll want to open this Assessment Tool link a few minutes before the scheduled start of your session and click the "Group Zoom Room" link to join us in Zoom. Please do not close the Assessment Tool page.

- When should I open the Assessment Tool and join the group Zoom room?

We recommend that you join us 5 minutes before your scheduled start time. Please don't be late! We will only wait until 2 minutes after the scheduled start time.

- What happens if I'm late or I don't show up?

If you're more than 2 minutes late joining us in the group Zoom room, you will be locked out of the assessment and will need to rebook. Directions for rebooking are in the "Canceling or Rescheduling" section of this FAQ.

Generally, there's no penalty for being late or missing your scheduled TAA session. However, if we notice that you do this frequently, we might restrict your ability to book TAA sessions in the future.

Please cancel your TAA session if you know you won't be able to attend.

- What happens if I can't join because of technical difficulties?

Please email your Enrollment Advisor or admissions@galvanize.com and explain your situation. We understand that issues can sometimes arise and we will work with you to figure out next steps.

During Your TAA Session

- Will I be working with other people during my TAA?

No, during the timed portion of the assessment, after the group introduction, you'll be working by yourself in your "personal" Zoom room.

- What if I need help or have a question during the TAA?

There's a "Request Help" button in the Assessment Tool. If you press this button, a proctor will come into your personal Zoom room to help you out. We encourage you to request help if you're stuck or something isn't clear.

- Do I need to start recording my Zoom session?

No, once you're in your personal Zoom room, your session will be automatically recorded to the cloud.

- Can I record my session or save problems from the assessment?

No. You must agree not to save or share any material from the assessment.

- Can I use notes, books, Prep modules, Google, MDN, Stack Overflow, etc.?

No, you cannot use any outside resources during the TAA and you should not need to.

- What if I really need to look something up?

Before you use any outside resources, please request help and discuss it with a proctor.

- Can I work in repl.it or another editor or environment?

No. You must do all of your coding within the Assessment Tool.

- Even though I'll be working by myself, should I share my thought process out loud?

Yes, we would like you to share our thought process out loud. Imagine that you're explaining your approach to someone who knows JavaScript well. At a high level, you should share your understanding of a problem, your approach to solving it, and your thoughts on testing and debugging it. Please don't talk about every line of code.

- Should I write pseudocode?

Pseudocode is a great way to show your understanding of a problem and to plan out your code. Just make sure your pseudocode isn't as detailed as your code would be. It's okay to say "iterate over the array" rather than "make a for loop that starts with an index variable *i* set to zero, has an entry condition of *i* strictly less than the length of the array, and has an end of iteration expression that increments *i* by one". Good pseudocode should help you solve a problem efficiently, not slow you down.

- What about coding for edge conditions?

If you recognize an edge condition, you might acknowledge it out loud, but in the interest of time, don't code for edge conditions (empty data, incorrect data types, etc.).

- Will I need to do code testing?

Tests have been created and given to show you that you passed a given prompt or not. You will not need to create your own tests or write your own testing functions.

- Can I run the code I'm working on?

Yes, you'll be able to run the code and see any errors and console.log output. We encourage you to run the code.

- Is there any penalty for using console.log's or running the code?

No! We want you to have a plan for your code, but using console.log's and running the code is a great way to validate that the code is working, or to understand why the code isn't working.

- How many problems are there in the assessment?

We don't share how many problems there are. Please get as far as you can and do the problems in order. Don't skip ahead unless a proctor instructs you to do so. We care more about the quality of your work than the quantity.

- How will I know how much time to spend on each problem?

The proctors will monitor how much time you're spending on each problem. If you're taking too long, they'll suggest speeding up or moving on to the next problem.

- Will I get partial credit for problems that I don't complete?

Yes. In addition to your final code, we care about your approach to a problem. You can demonstrate your approach and understanding by sharing your thinking, pseudocoding, commenting your code, and/or writing good, clean code.

- How will I know how much time is left in the assessment?

The Assessment Tool will display a countdown timer. You can set your own timer on your phone or another device, if you'd like.

- Are the TAA problems the same for first, second, and third attempts?

No, the format is the same but the problems are different for each attempt.

- What if I have a technical issue during the assessment?

We understand that things can happen that are out of a candidate's control. If you get disconnected from or locked out of the assessment, please email your Enrollment Advisor or admissions@galvanize.com and explain your situation. We will work with you on the next steps.

- What if I finish the assessment early or want to leave before the time is up?

Please request help and a proctor will discuss what to do. Please do not leave the assessment without first informing a proctor.

- What happens when time is up?

After the 55 minutes have elapsed, we'll give you 1 additional minute to wrap up the problem you're working on. Then we'll lock the assessment.

Once the assessment is locked, there will be a link displayed to rejoin the group Zoom room.

In the group Zoom room, after a brief wrap-up, you and other candidates attending the session will have an opportunity to ask questions.

After Your TAA

- When will I get the results of my TAA?

Your Enrollment Advisor will contact you with your results within 3 business days, often sooner.

- How will I be contacted with my results?

You might receive an email or a phone call.

- To determine my result, will you be reviewing just my code or more than that?

In addition to your code, we'll review your Zoom recording to fully understand your skill level, your approach to problem-solving, and your ability to share your thought process.

- What type of feedback will I get about my performance?

If you pass your assessment, you won't get any specific feedback.

If you don't pass your assessment, you'll get some feedback about areas for improvement and study.

- Can I have a copy of my TAA or the Zoom recording?

Unfortunately, no.

- If I don't pass, how soon can I retake the TAA?

You must wait a minimum of 2 weeks (14 days) before retaking the TAA. We request that you wait for your results before booking another TAA session.

- If I don't pass, is any tutoring or coaching available?

Generally, no. Most candidates who do not pass the TAA require significant additional study and practice, which is beyond the scope of any coaching services provided by Galvanize. In these instances, we recommend further self-study and/or the completion of an appropriate Prep course. In some instances, candidates who performed exceptionally on the TAA, but did not pass, may be eligible for additional coaching as determined by Galvanize in its sole discretion. We base this decision on how well a candidate performed against our standardized evaluative criteria. No candidate is entitled to any coaching by Galvanize.

- If I pass my TAA, what happens after I get my results?

After getting your TAA results, you will be sent your Student Enrollment Agreement (SEA) within 2 business days. If you're within several weeks of your cohort start date, signing the agreement will trigger the release of the precourse material.

- What if I have questions after my TAA session?

Please contact your Enrollment Advisor.