

A Beginner's Guide On Hackathons

Ever since a student enters into an Engineering college, he/she always comes across the word 'Hackathon'. With the basic knowledge that one has, one starts assuming, "This might be something related to **hacking!**" but, is that it? Let's read ahead to know more.

What is a hackathon?

- A hackathon is an event held by a company, an organization or an institute where multiple group of programmers come together and solve a problem statement (hardware/software) before the end of the event. The group which solves the problem statement in the best and most efficient way by making a functional hardware or software wins the contest.
- The time period of a hackathon **usually ranges between 24-48 hrs.** Yes! Means intensive problem solving dedication is needed for this. Hence working in a team of 3-4 is always advised (every hackathon's criteria on no. of team members is different).
- Ideally, the organizing committee gives **certain problem statements or themes from various domains** and the participants are bound to stick to them. Eg: If the theme is education, the teams have to make best use of the limited time to **develop a unique solution** for a problem pertaining the 'education' theme. The solution can be in the form of an app or a website or anything else.
- There is a panel of judges present for a hackathon who also work as mentors. At a specific given time, this panel of judges check the work of each group. They see the amount of progress made by the group, ask about a particular block of code and check the amount of implementation completed. Also, they suggest a few things and in the next round they see to it whether the suggestion was implemented or not.
- And with all of this, taking into consideration your innovation, logic, creativity, the **best optimal solution wins!**

Criteria for choosing your team:

This one is actually a very subjective decision but here are some tips for you to help you ace your hackathon participation:

Build a team with members of different skills in it aka The Perfect Dream Team.

One person could be good at UI/UX, frontend, others could be good at backend, one with database, this way there will be a **balanced division of work** between all members for efficient work.

Why participate in a hackathon?

- Sharpens skills and knowledge.
- You are provided with mentoring support during hackathons to help participants develop their model.
- Promotes innovative thinking.
- Boosts resume value and helps for better recruitment.
- Improves teamwork and leadership qualities.
- Improves time management and adaptability to work in a competitive environment.

Important rules of a hackathon:

- The entire idea need not be fully implemented however, the submission should be functional so that it can be reviewed by the judges.
- The developer/developers of the solution will have all rights and own the IP of the product. However, all code needs to be in public domain (open source) so that it can be evaluated by the judges.
- Most hackathons are limited to Engineering college students but many hackathons also include Bsc and Msc students as well.

Top Hackathons in India:

Smart India Hackathon: A nationwide hackathon for AICTE approved colleges Engineering students

HackCBS: Organised in Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies, University of Delhi

Megathon: Organised in E-cell IIIT Hyderabad

Hack in the North (HINT): Organised in IIIT Allahabad

Rajasthan Hackathon: Organized by Department of IT&C, Rajasthan