

CAREER GUIDE

Getting Your First Tech Job

A practical roadmap from learning to your first offer.

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ABOUT ME

About Me



Tobi is a Software Engineer with over six years of experience across financial services and Big Tech. He currently works as a Senior Software and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Engineer at Meta, building large-scale AI systems for privacy risk identification and mitigation. Prior to Meta, he served as a Vice President (VP) of Software Engineering at Goldman Sachs, leading the development of portfolio management and master data management systems.

MY JOURNEY

My Journey

One first opportunity can compound over time.



ORIENTATION

The Playbook



Choose

THE TECH LANDSCAPE

Tech Is Bigger Than Just Coding

There are multiple viable technology careers. Software engineering is only one of them.

Engineering

- Frontend
- Backend
- Mobile
- Full-stack

Data and AI

- Data analytics
- Data engineering
- Data science
- Machine learning
- AI engineering

Product and Design

- Product management
- Product design / UX

Infrastructure, Security and Quality

- DevOps / SRE
- Cybersecurity
- QA / test engineering

CHOOSE A PATH

Depth Before Breadth

You are not choosing your 'forever career'. You are choosing what to focus on now.

Scattered

- Jumping between languages and frameworks
- Chasing whatever tutorial is trending
- Never building past the basics

RECOMMENDED

Focused

- Pick one path and go deep
- Build real projects, not just tutorials
- Depth creates evidence you can defend

Learn

LEARN EFFECTIVELY

Different Learning Routes

University / formal education

Bootcamps

Apprenticeships

Online courses

Community and mentorship

Self-directed learning

Most people combine more than one route.

LEARN EFFECTIVELY

What Makes Learning Stick

Fundamentals

Learn the core concepts for your target role.

Community

Peers, mentors, events, feedback and accountability.

Practice

Build, get stuck, research, fix and repeat.

Avoid tutorial hell

Passive learning eventually has to become active building.

LEARN EFFECTIVELY

Using AI Well

Use AI to amplify your skills, not replace your understanding.

Basic AI usage is increasingly common. What sets candidates apart is using the AI tools relevant to their role well, while keeping the fundamentals and judgement to validate the output.

Role	Where AI helps
Engineering	Coding assistants e.g Claude Code, Codex
Data	AI-assisted analysis
Design	Prototyping and research tools e.g Claude Design, Lovable
Product	Synthesis and drafting tools

Build

BUILD

Portfolio: Evidence Beats Tutorials

A portfolio reduces employer uncertainty by showing what you can actually build, not just what you followed.

Tutorial project

- Follows a guide step by step
- Looks like everyone else's
- Proves you can follow instructions

Portfolio project

- Solves a problem you chose
- Has decisions you can explain
- Proves you can build independently

BUILD

What Counts as a Portfolio

Engineer

GitHub, a deployed project and a clear README.

Designer

Behance, Dribbble, a Figma case study or portfolio site.

Data

GitHub, Kaggle, Tableau Public or Power BI.

Product

A teardown, PRD, case study or evidence of shipping with a team.

Package

PACKAGE

CV: Package the Evidence

The CV's job is to earn the interview.

- One page is usually enough for an entry-level candidate.
- Prioritise relevant evidence over completeness.
- Don't list tools or claims you can't comfortably discuss in an interview.
- Include role-relevant portfolio links.
- Use impact-driven bullets, not technology-only descriptions.

Example bullet point:

WEAK

Built a web application using React and Node.js.

STRONGER

Built and deployed a React/Node.js application used by 50 students to organise study materials, reducing manual coordination across WhatsApp groups.

Note: Your first CV would probably be half empty and that's okay. The goal is to strategically and intentionally develop over time.

See a full [sample CV](#).

Find

FIND

There Is More Than One Door to Your First Job

Do not treat one hiring channel or one famous company as the only route to a first role.

- Internships, especially for students; can convert into return offers.
- Graduate / new-grad roles, often recruiting well before graduation.
- Apprenticeships, useful for non-traditional routes and career changers.
- Startups, SMEs, agencies, consultancies and non-tech companies with technology teams.

FIND

Finding Opportunities

Use multiple channels, and treat the job search as a repeatable process.

- Company career pages.
- LinkedIn jobs and recruiter discovery.
- Referrals and relationships.
- Meetups, conferences, hackathons and university or community events.
- Short, specific recruiter or employee outreach.

"A referral is not a job offer. It can help route your application through an employee referral channel, but you still need to meet the bar."

Prepare

PREPARE

Preparing for Interviews

Interviewing is a separate skill from doing the job.

Start by understanding the interview process for the specific company and role. Prepare for the stages you'll actually face, not every stage that exists.

Coding

System Design

Debugging

Behavioural

PREPARE

Preparing By Interview Type

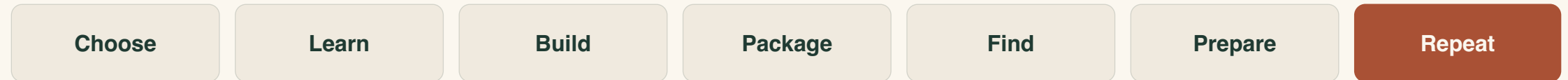
Coding	Data structures, algorithms, problem solving, AI coding, code debugging, communication and testing. Resources: LeetCode , NeetCode .
Behavioural	Motivation, challenges, disagreements, failure and project examples, using the STAR framework.
Technical / System design	Role dependent. For junior roles, expect a simple API, schema or service, not global-scale architecture. Try Hello Interview for practice.

GENERAL INTERVIEW ADVICE

Mock interviews	Practise thinking aloud and performing under time pressure. Try Hello Interview or Pramp for structured practice.
AI for preparation	Useful for practice questions, feedback and explanations, but you still need to own and understand your answers.
Past questions	Look up real questions asked at your target companies on LeetCode , Glassdoor and Blind .

THE FRAMEWORK

The First-Tech-Job Playbook



You don't need to know everything before you apply. Learn and apply in parallel.

THIS WEEK

What can you do this week?

- Choose a path.
- Start or improve one project.
- Fix your CV.
- Identify target companies.
- Begin applying and start interview practice.

Thank You

Questions?