

# STAGES OF A NOOB'S PROGRAMMING CONTEST

Fatiul Huq Sujoy

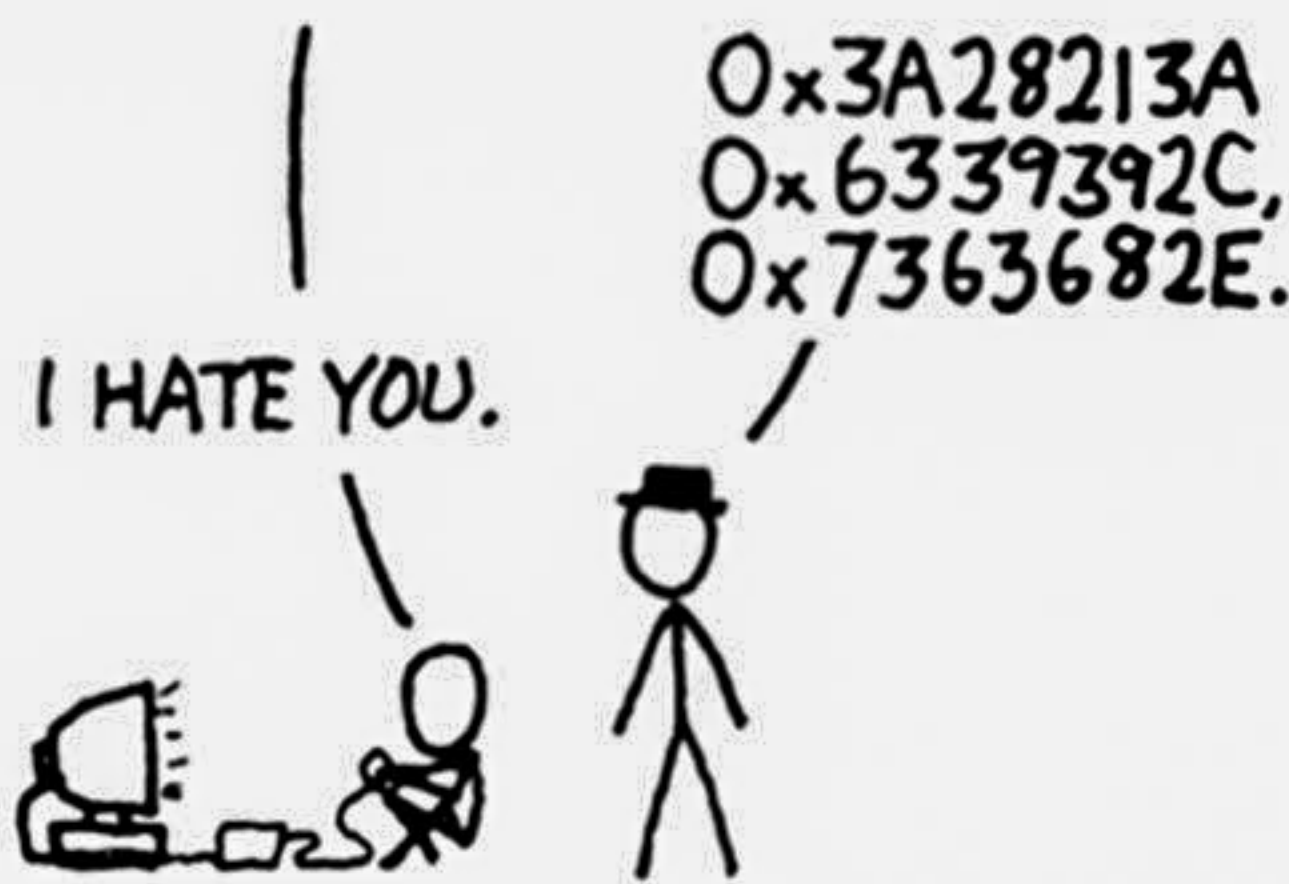
As computer nerds battle for computational supremacy in programming contests, the lesser geniuses struggle with basic coding, patience, friendships and turning their PCs off and on again. Read on to know more about the struggles of amateur programmers in the 5 hour long brainstorm and stress marathon that is a programming contest.

`.init()`

When it comes to the big contests, there's a lot of non-programming jargon that has to be passed first. The worst of them comes first – forming a team. Not only does it require human interactions, it's usually the time when you find out that you don't have friends. Then comes finding a coach, thinking of a completely unique



MAN, I SUCK AT THIS GAME.  
CAN YOU GIVE ME  
A FEW POINTERS?



team name (that ends up being a nerdy reference used by the other 13021 teams around the world) and registering. If the contest has a dedicated venue then you also need to make travel plans. For somebody who only traverses through functions in code, this one's a tricky job.

A strong start to the contest also requires the team members to practice the different data structures and algorithms, participate in online or mock contests beforehand, set the environment of their dedicated machine, and prepare a game plan on work and time management based on everyone's programming abilities.

`.start()`

It's very much safe to say that none of the above requirements ever gets done and any such game plan bites the dust because that one member allegedly got stuck in traffic. Other probable scenarios include the PC rebooting itself 15 times for no apparent reason, the non-existence of any working IDE and no internet.

By the time they start, they'll find that 43 teams are already on their 3rd problem. Despair kicks in sooner than expected.

`.argue()`

P1 – "This is the 17th TLE (Time Limit Exceeded) Mahfuz! I'm telling you, we need Dijkstra's algorithm for this."

P2 – "Oh my God, Marium, this isn't even a Graph problem! I'm using the Greedy approach and it's gonna work, chill."

P1 – "You know what will work, you stop being greedy

and let us take charge."

P2 – "Yeah like girls can code. Pfft."

P1 – "How dare you!"

P3 – "Hey guys, I think this problem's one of those trick ones. I think you just have to print 1 to 100."

P1 and P2 – "Shut up Kashem. You don't even have a CodeForces account."

`.questionEverything()`

When the TLEs keep on stacking up and even the raddest algorithm you know is generating an  $n^4$  complexity, the general man would question the purpose of their futile lives. But our amateur programmers are above all this. So they question the efficiency of their college courses, the knowledge of their professors and the legitimacy of their opponents. If their arguments shattered their team spirit, then like many other cases in human history, blaming a third party fixes it back up.

`.recess()`

A programming contest is stressful business. With the clock constantly ticking and the other teams cruising through problems, getting stuck on a single one is no good for your mental health or sweat pores. The best course of action is to take a break, bring out that Energy biscuit and do some *sukhdukkheralap*.

`.solve()`

Finally it happened. After 89 Wrong Answers, 48 Presentation Errors and 236 TLEs, the sight of a green Accepted sign on your first problem feels nothing less heavenly than a whiff of biriyani. Unfortunately the celebration is short lived because the neighbouring teams are busy solving their 6th problem.

But now that they've solved their first problem and broken the barrier, the rest will come by easily.

Haha no, I'm just kidding. The second problem's gonna take double the effort to solve and difficulty will only increase exponentially.

`.resolution()`

During the last minutes of the contest as the ranking is almost confirmed and there are no more problems worth trying to solve, our noob team notices that for their standards they haven't performed that bad. A little bit more commitment and practice along with refined team work can actually put them in a respectable position in the future. The team promises to each other to work on their collaboration and improve individually. They shake

hands, take a few selfies and decide on how to taunt their friends who did worse.

`.terminate()`

As the contest ends and our noob programmers remember their course assignment due the next day, they immediately forget their resolutions and delve into the life of academic pressure and aggressive procrastination.

Fatiul Huq Sujoy is a tired soul (mostly because of his frail body) who's patiently waiting for Hagrid to appear and tell him, "Ye're a saiyan, lord commander." Suggest him places to travel and food-ventures to take at [fb.com/SyedSujoy](https://www.facebook.com/SyedSujoy).

## SIMPLY EXPLAINED

