Sthuthi
TECHNOLOGIES

STUDENT GUIDE · FREE RESOURCE

Build a Claude Code portfolio project you can defend.

A step-by-step guide for engineering students: learn the tool for free, build one small project properly, keep the evidence recruiters look for, and describe it honestly.



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START HERE

Employers want AI skills. They also want proof.

Almost every student can say they've "used AI." Far fewer can show a project where they directed an AI coding tool, checked what it did and explained their decisions. That's the gap this guide helps you close.

16.5%
of entry-level job descriptions mentioned AI skills in NACE's spring 2026 employer survey, up from 10.5% in fall 2025.[1]

85%
of Indian employers prefer graduates with GenAI skills, though only 12% make it a mandatory hiring criterion.[2]

9%
of Indian employers say fresh graduates are job-ready from day one, while 68% of students believe they are.[2]

What the data says, and what it doesn't

- NACE found nearly 60% of employers give interns projects that use AI tools, yet 50.5% of graduating students said they weren't building AI skills.[1]
- Stanford's Digital Economy Lab finds employment for 22- to 25-year-olds in highly AI-exposed occupations about 19% below trend, mainly through reduced hiring rather than layoffs. Where AI complements workers rather than automating tasks, employment is flat or rising. The authors stress this isn't definitive evidence of AI's effects.[3]
- No published study shows that any single AI certificate raises your chance of being hired. A project you can explain is stronger evidence than a badge on its own.

> **The goal of this guide**
>
> Finish one small, real project where you can show **what you asked the tool to do, what you checked, what went wrong and how you fixed it.** That is what an interviewer will probe, and what a recruiter can verify.

STEP 1

Learn the tool for free

Course	What you get	Before you start
Claude Code 101 Anthropic Academy	12 lessons in four sections (what Claude Code is, your first prompt, daily workflows, customising Claude Code), about 1.5 hours, one quiz and a completion badge.[4]	Basic familiarity with a code editor and the command line, plus a Claude account (Pro, Max or Enterprise) or an API key.[4]
Claude Code in Action Anthropic Academy	For people who already use Claude Code: steering longer sessions, CLAUDE.md, permission modes, hooks, automation and verifying work.[5]	Some prior use of Claude Code.[5]

A course badge shows you finished a course. It isn't a proctored assessment, so treat it as learning, not proof of skill.

STEP 2

Choose a project worth defending

Pick something small enough to finish in two to three weeks and real enough that a mistake would matter. Good projects have:

- ☐ **Behaviour you can test:** inputs and outputs you can check automatically.
- ☐ **An existing codebase to change,** even a small open-source one, so you practise working inside someone else's structure.
- ☐ **One external dependency,** such as an API or database, so you have to think about failures and secrets.
- ☐ **A clear "done":** one sentence that says what the finished change does.

Three project ideas

Idea	What it lets you show
Add a feature to an open-source project	Reading an unfamiliar codebase, keeping changes in scope, writing tests that fit the project's style, a real pull request and review.
A small API with a database	Planning before coding, input validation, error handling, tests, and keeping keys out of the repository.
Fix and test a known bug	Reproducing the bug with a failing test first, finding the root cause, and proving the fix.

STEP 3

Work the way professionals do

Anthropic's own best-practice guide recommends a four-phase workflow: **explore, plan, implement, commit.**[6] Follow it, and keep notes as you go.

Phase	What to do	Note down
Explore	Use plan mode so Claude reads the code and answers questions without making changes.[6]	What you learned about the codebase
Plan	Ask for a plan: which files change and why. Edit the plan before any code is written.[6]	The plan, and anything you changed in it
Implement	Give Claude a check it can run, such as tests or a build, and ask it to run them and fix failures. Anthropic advises having Claude "show evidence rather than asserting success."[6]	The test output, and any wrong turns
Commit	Read the whole diff yourself before committing. Check scope, new dependencies, and anything that touches secrets or configuration.	What you changed, removed or rejected



Habits that make the project credible

- **Add a short CLAUDE.md** with build and test commands and your style rules. Anthropic suggests keeping it brief and checking it into git.[6]
- **Use git, not just the tool's undo.** Claude Code's checkpoints only track edits made through its own file tools and aren't a replacement for git.[6]
- **Never paste real keys** into prompts or code. Use environment variables and keep them out of the repository.
- **Keep one mistake.** When the tool gets something wrong and you catch it, write it down. It's the most useful thing you'll have in an interview.

STEP 4

Keep the evidence in your README

Recruiters and interviewers rarely run your code. They read your README and your commit history. Copy this structure into your project:

```
## What this change does
One sentence. Link to the issue or task.

## Scope
Files and areas I allowed the tool to change, and what was off-limits.

## How I used Claude Code
What I delegated, what I wrote myself, and how I planned it.

## How I checked it
Tests added or run, with the command and result.
What I looked for in the diff (scope, dependencies, config, secrets).

## A mistake I caught
What the tool got wrong, how I noticed, and how I fixed it.

## What I'd do next
Limits of this version and the next improvement.
```

What a reviewer looks for in your repository

- [ ] Steady, descriptive commits rather than one large upload
- [ ] Tests that would fail if the feature broke
- [ ] A pull request with a clear description, even if you merged it yourself
- [ ] No secrets, generated junk or unrelated files in the history
- [ ] A README that matches what the code actually does

FOR YOUR COLLEGE OR PLACEMENT CELL

Claude Code Foundations for student batches

Sthuthi runs a Foundations-level programme through colleges and universities, ending in an assessed task and an independent credential with a verifiable ID. It isn't an Anthropic certification and doesn't guarantee a job; it works best alongside a project like this one.

sthuthi-tech.com/certifications/claude-code-students

Will certification help the Class of 2027? → Compare student courses → For colleges in India →

SCAN TO SEE THE PROGRAMME

STEP 5

Describe it honestly on your résumé

Weak or risky	Strong and accurate
✗ "Expert in AI and Claude"	✓ "Built [feature] in [project] using Claude Code for a scoped change; reviewed the diff and added [n] tests"
✗ "Anthropic Certified" (unless Anthropic actually issued your credential)	✓ Name the real issuer, such as "Claude Code 101 (Anthropic Academy, course completion)"
✗ "Improved productivity by 300%"	✓ Only numbers you measured, such as "test coverage from 40% to 72% on the module I changed"
✗ A list of tools with no evidence	✓ One line with a link to the repository and pull request

Be ready for these interview questions

1. What did you ask the tool to do, and how did you scope it?
2. Which files was it allowed to change, and why?
3. Walk me through the diff. What did you reject or change?
4. How do you know it works? Show me the tests.
5. Tell me about a time the tool was wrong. How did you notice?
6. What would break if a dependency or API failed?
7. Which part did you write yourself, and why?



Sources

1. NACE, "Ready or Reluctant? Employer Expectations for AI Skills Meet Student Skepticism" (2026; Job Outlook 2026 Spring Update, 185 employers, Feb–Mar 2026; 2026 Student Survey, 17,000+ students). https://www.naceweb.org/about-us/press/2026/ready-or-reluctant-employer-expectations-for-ai-skills-meet-student-skepticism
2. HirePro, "Only 9% of corporates say fresh college graduates are job-ready on Day 1, while 68% of students believe they are" (State of College Hiring in India 2026; 10,000+ students, 80+ corporates, 100+ colleges; 3 August 2026). https://hirepro.in/resources/news/only-9-of-corporates-say-fresh-college-graduates-are-job-ready-on-day-1-while-68-of-students-believe-they-are-hirepro-report
3. Stanford Digital Economy Lab, "No Widespread Displacement, but the AI Employment Gap for Young Workers Has Widened to 19%" (12 August 2026). https://digitaleconomy.stanford.edu/news/canariesaug26/
4. Anthropic Academy, "Claude Code 101." https://academy.claude.com/courses/claude-code-101
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6. Anthropic, "Best practices for Claude Code." https://code.claude.com/docs/en/best-practices

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