CoderDojo Foundation

Your Guide to

Safeguarding Young People

What is CoderDojo?

CoderDojo provides a free, safe and fun environment for children aged 7 to 17 to learn to code.

At Dojos, children have the opportunity to discover and understand the technology which shapes the world they live in.

As of December 2015 there are more than 850 active, free CoderDojo clubs (Dojos) in over 63 countries which meet regularly to share their passion for technology.

In these clubs children learn how to build websites, apps, video games and much more. Young people who attend Dojos also learn complementary skills of logical thinking, problem solving, presentation and communication.

In the CoderDojo community there is a focus on peer learning, mentorship and self led learning while showing how coding and technology can be a force for change in the world.

Most importantly, CoderDojo is about encouraging creativity and having fun with technology in a social environment. CoderDojo makes development and learning to code a fun, sociable, rewarding experience. CoderDojo Recruitment Procedures

About this Guide

Dojos are run by volunteer mentors and Champions from communities all across the world. It is vital, in order to keep Dojos a fun and safe social space, that all adults involved with the Dojo are aware of best practices for safeguarding children attending their Dojos.

This guide is designed to give you an overview of best practices for recruiting mentors and working with young people.

In most countries there are also regional legislations in place for organisations working with young people with supports in place. You can find out specific information for Ireland here>, the UK here> and the US here>.

If you are setting up a Dojo it is your responsibility to align with your own regional legislation and ensure that you are doing everything you need to meet requirements on this in your jurisdiction.

Safely Recruiting Volunteers

CoderDojo volunteers are central to the CoderDojo movement.

CoderDojo strongly encourages Dojos to adopt a proactive attitude and undertake a systematic approach to adult recruitment. When recruiting adults, the role they are expected to undertake should be clearly defined with a volunteer specification (see Supporting Documents).

Attitude and approach are an important factor in recruiting people; they can learn the skills and acquire the knowledge required for their role through formal and informal training.

Some traits that you should look for in CoderDojo volunteers and mentors include:

● Ability to communicate and interact with young people

● Interest in young people developing technology and interpersonal skills

● Understanding acceptable boundaries with young people especially surrounding conversations, smoking, drugs, alcohol etc.

● Ability to work with other adults as part of a team

● Good communication skills

● A commitment to ongoing personal development and training

● Open and positive approach and attitude

● Passionate about technology & programming

CoderDojo Volunteer Recruitment Proceedures

1. Volunteer Description
Having decided on the role(s), the functions should then be outlined in a comprehensive volunteer job description, which describes in detail the tasks required of the potential volunteer.
Why is this necessary? This gives the volunteer a clear understanding of what is expected from them in their role

2. Application Form
Should be supplied to all applicants with a clear job description and information on the organisation.

3. Interview/Informal Meeting
The Champion or a representative of the Dojo should conduct an interview, or meet the potential volunteer at the Dojo so that the application form can be explored against the kinds of qualities and skills required for the post. e.g. Any previous experience of working with young people would be of particular relevance or programming knowledge of a potential Mentor could fit into your Dojo.

4. Referees
The applicant should be obliged to supply the names of two referees (non relatives) who are willing to supply the organisation with references on their behalf. All references should be checked by telephone and any additional notes recorded.

5. Declaration of Suitability
Applicants should be obliged to sign a declaration form indicating that there is no reason why they would be deemed unsuitable for working with young people.

6. Training Identification
The interview process may indicate some specific and immediate training needs. The Dojo should respond to these needs and arrange delivery. Training should include: Child Protection awareness training. Other more targeted and specific training may be offered as an option to volunteers.

7. Selection
Inform the applicant if they have been successful or unsuccessful in writing (via email or by letter).

8. First Dojo Buddy
All new volunteers should be partnered with another volunteer during their initial period of work with young people. This form of partnering should be carried out with experienced and existing volunteers to guide the new volunteer into the role. Even if a Dojo is low on mentors, this small period of buddying will help retain the new mentors and ensure a high quality of mentoring within the Dojo.
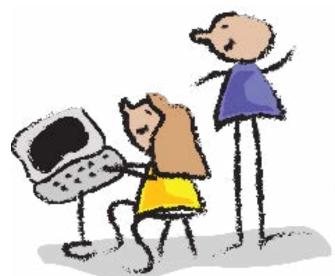
Volunteer Code of Behaviours - Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Do provide a safe, secure environment for the young people attending the Dojo.
- Do ensure that the minimum ratio of 1:10, adults: young people, is always present at all CoderDojo activities.
- Do treat all young people as individuals, equally and with respect, regardless of gender, age, religion, ethnicity or creed.
- Do involve Dojo attendees, where appropriate, in decision making.
- Do offer constructive, age-appropriate criticism, encouragement and praise.
- Do use material appropriate to the age and wishes of the group.
- Do have fun and encourage a positive and collaborative atmosphere.
- Do be aware of what is appropriate physical contact and engage in this contact only.
- Do respect the personal and sexual boundaries of others.
- Do discuss any uncertainties with the Dojo Champion or another adult member.
- Do discuss discipline procedures with the Dojo beforehand and be familiar with their policy.

Don't

- Do Not spend time alone with children. If meeting with children individually do so as openly as possible, leave the door open and inform another responsible adult of the meeting.
- Do Not use or allow the use of offensive or sexually suggestive physical or verbal language to go unchallenged.
- Do Not single out an individual child for unfair favoritism, criticism, ridicule or unwelcome focus of attention.
- Do Not allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form. However there may be unavoidable occasions when this takes place, such as providing comfort or reassurance to a distressed child. In all cases physical contact should only take place with the consent of the child.
- Do Not physically chastise children or young people.
- Do Not socialize inappropriately with children or young people outside of structured organisational activities.
- Do Not take children to your home.
- Do Not take children alone on car journeys. If this is unavoidable do so only with the full consent and knowledge of the parents and someone in the hosting organization.
- Do Not do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Do Not allow allegations a child makes go without being recorded and addressed.

Online Safety

As an adult involved in running a Dojo or a Special Coderdojo Event it is important to ensure that all ninjas are staying safe online during their Dojo. While the internet and other online technologies can open a vast amount of opportunities for young people, there are also risks associated with being online. You must be aware of the risks and be proactive in looking out for your ninjas safety online.

Some of the risks and dangers that CoderDojo Adults should be aware of include:
● Cyberbullying
● Exposure to inappropriate content, including pornography
● Ignoring age restrictions
● Young people 'friending' or communicating with people they don't know
● Unethical hacking

What should you do if you notice this type of behaviour?
As Mentors you must be aware of the risks online and be proactive in looking out for your ninjas online safety. If you notice anything like the above occurring in your Dojo or you have any concerns speak in confidence with the Champion of the Dojo about your concerns and how best to address these issues. Usually simply making the young person aware that the behaviour is not suitable in your Dojo and asking them to stop will be sufficient.

The Risks and Dangers Online
Cyberbullying (Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online either on social networking sites or through online gaming)
Exposure to inappropriate content, including pornography

Children and young people may see illegal or inappropriate content online, such as:
● pornography
● child abuse images
● dangerous advice encouraging eating disorders, self harm or suicide
● excessive violence or race hate materials.

Some websites can contain illegal materials, others may be legal, but could be meant for adults only. Children may access this inappropriate content accidentally, or intentionally through curiosity. They may also be enticed by promises of special offers or prizes, so it is important to be aware of this when giving them access to the internet.

Ignoring age restrictions
Some websites and games use age restrictions and checks to ensure that children don't see unsuitable content. Did you know that children must be at least 13 years or older to register on most social networking websites. The age limit is an important safety measure there for a reason and you should not be pressured into letting your child join these websites.

Young people 'friending' or communicating with people they don't know
Young people may chat or become 'friends' with people they don't know or have never met via social networks or online games.

The percentage of online friends that children did not know outside of being online was:
● 12% for 8 - 11 years olds in 2012
● 25% for 12 - 15 year olds in 2013

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide and please

remember that if you are setting up a Dojo it is your responsibility to

align with your own regional legislation and ensure that you are doing

everything you need to meet requirements on this in your jurisdiction.

Protecting young people and keeping them safe in Dojos around the world

is incredibly important for CoderDojo.

By reading this guide and sharing it with other volunteers in your Dojo

you're helping us to make this a reality.

If you've any questions about this guide please feel free to

contact info@coderdojo.org.