

What's My Function?

A programming
zine for
beginners.
Issue #2



By Jessica Garson

About What's My Function

What's my function is a beginner's programming zine designed with the needs of those who are just getting started in mind. Five years ago, I started writing code but lacked a community and it wasn't an easy process. I often felt the process was intimidating and overwhelming. About 2 years ago, I learned about Hear Me Code (HMC) with its free beginner friendly classes for women by women. After starting with HMC, I became confident in writing and teaching others how to code.

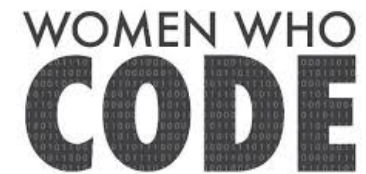
Coming from the punk community, I've always admired the DIY spirit of the zine community. The self publication method meant that zine's can be a bit more personal than just having a blog. While volunteering for DC zine fest, I learned in a pre-github world people used to share code via programming and zines I figured this might a good medium for those who want to learn to learn easily.

This zine intends to be a place for folks to learn more about programming and how to learn how to code.

Want to contribute to future issues – please email me at jessica.garson@gmail.com



With its large array of programming groups and classes, DC is the best place to learn how to code. Here are some of my favorite groups in town.



What do you wish you knew before you got started coding?

“Be more fearless and break your computer. You learn the most in the debugging” – Tanya Tarr

“Learning a new pattern is much more valuable than a new language” – Travis Hoppe

“Even the most experienced Developers utilize a lot of trial and error. Struggling through code and asking google is natural” – Nicholas Marcouiller

Dear What's My Function,

I really want to get started writing code, but it can be very overwhelming sometimes. What do I need to write code?

-Confused in Capitol Hill

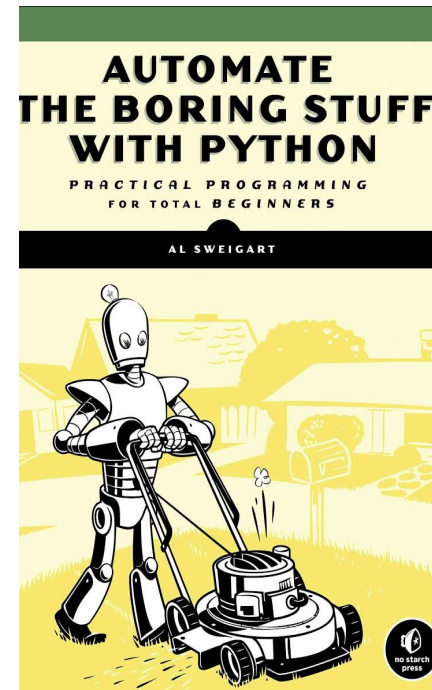
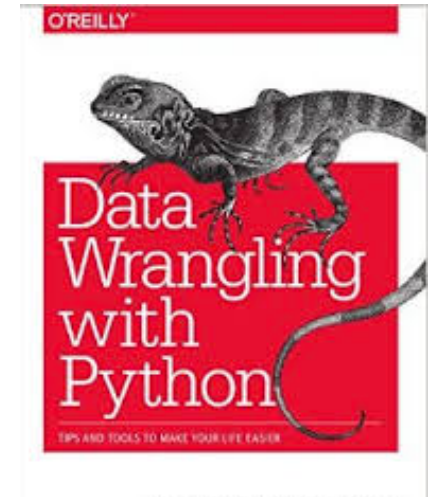
Dear Confused,

Technically all you need is a text editor and command line environment. The text editors that I recommend are atom, sublime text, and notepad ++ (for PCs). There is a wide array of integrated development environments (IDE) out there that can vary based on the language you are looking to write. An IDE will have a command line and a editor built in and will give you hints along the way to help you out. My favorite way to learn is in a large group setting, however there is something extremely satisfying about finishing a programming book.

Want to learn how to code – Ask a librarian

Most of our local libraries have resources available and can help find you books so that you can learn how to code.

My favorite books to start to learn how to code with are as follows:



When I first started writing code, everyone told me that the best way to learn is to work on a project but when you haven't quite figured out what your capabilities are yet it's a bit harder to figure out where to start and what a good project is. A great place to get started is to build a text based game using python. This same logic can be used to create a game that ask questions and replies based on your answers.

Python is great language to get started with because it's flexible enough to build a website, do basic automation with or you can even use it as a stats language.

In python, you can assign a string to a variable. A string can be sentence, a word, or even a long paragraph. We can get started by assigning our name to a variable called Jessica with quotes around it.

```
name = "Jessica"
```

From there we can format strings which can be other sentence with and add our variables to it. Since python starts counting at zero, the first variable we want to add in would be zero.

```
statement = "Hello {0}, it's nice to  
meet you".format(name)  
print statement
```

We can have the program ask us questions using `raw_input()` and those questions can be set to variables so we can save the information and it can ask us questions from there. Be careful, if you are looking to do math with the answers because you will need to convert the numbers from strings into integers.

```
response = "Well {0}, {1} is a great  
color, nice to meet you, have a  
great day".format(name, color)  
print response
```

Once, you've built a text based game, you can move onto creating a more robust project. A formula that works, pretty well for creating a great project is combining two datasets and displaying them on webpage.

Dataset + Related Dataset = Great Project

The python library `requests` is a simple way to interact with apis and has great documentation around it.

We can get these datasets using APIs which is a common means to connect to data in a robust fashion.

