CoderDojo Foundation

Your Guide on how to

START A DOJO

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. There are 800+ CoderDojo clubs (Dojos) in over 60 countries which meet regularly to learn new and important skills. 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 skills. There is a focus on community, peer learning, mentorship and self led learning with an emphasis on openness, helping others and showing how coding is 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.

About this Guide

This guide is designed to give you an initial overview so you know how to get started. We want to make the experience as easy, fun, and rewarding as possible. The steps that follow are the core of making a CoderDojo happen. They are simple and require no funding, so go for it and jump in.

Once you have read this guide and have become a Champion by registering your email address with us, (Step 1) we will provide you with more resources and support on every aspect of making your CoderDojo work.

Are you a CoderDojo Champion?

So What's a Champion?

A CoderDojo Champion is an individual who volunteers to take charge of setting up, running and maintaining a Dojo. A Champion cares about their community enough to take the initiative to add some CoderDojo magic to it.

Once the CoderDojo is open the Champion is the person to count on to reliably show up, to make sure the doors are open and to be the person who makes sure everything is in order. A Champion can be viewed as the project manager of a Dojo.

You don't have to know how to code to be a Champion, you just have to have passion for the mission and the drive to make things happen! Ideal Champions are great at running events, gathering and organising people with the relevant skills. Champions should have the passion and drive and be able to tap into a network of technical mentors in their area.

Without Champions, there would be no CoderDojos. So we want to assist you in every way we can to be a Champion and help your CoderDojo grow and succeed.

You are not alone and if you do become a CoderDojo Champion you will be join over 700 other CoderDojo Champions around the world in 58 countries!

As well as this the CoderDojo Foundation provide direct support for Champions and you can contact us at any time at info@coderdojo.com.

One rule, be cool! It's how we roll. Remember, be cool if things get in the way

Rebecca, CoderDojo NYC

Main Steps towards starting a Dojo

Step 1: Register as a Champion

Registering as a New CoderDojo Champion

The first step towards setting up your Dojo is to read through this guide and then go to coderdojo.com/start and register your information.

This is Zen, the CoderDojo Community Platform. Once you've completed the initial account registration and selected your user type as "Champion" you will be brought to the New Champion registration form.

Once you have completed your details you will be directed to indicate your progress so far in terms of the main steps towards setting up your Dojo as listed in this guide.

A member of the CoderDojo Foundation Team will be in touch with you at this point to provide you with further information and personally assist you with any specific supports you need.

You can then go about creating a listing for your Dojo so that it will appear on the map of global Dojos which can be seen here>>.

Before being verified you'll need to make sure you're meeting all of the steps in this guide!

If you are having issues using Zen or registering as a new Champion please check out http://kata.coderdojo.com/wiki/Zen or email the CoderDojo Foundation at info@coderdojo.com.

Step 2: Gather Your Team

Why is a team important?

You do not need to have a big team but it is good to have support and how big a team you need depends on how many young people you have at your Dojo.

Dedicated mentors when organising a Dojo. You can then have planning meetings with your team in advance of setting up your Dojo to discuss what kind of content you want to cover.

What is a mentor?

A mentor is a technically skilled individual who guides Dojo attendees and facilitates their learning and project work during the sessions. Mentors usually have a preferred area and expertise within which they like to work (eg. HTML, Python etc.) and this can influence the topics covered in the Dojo.
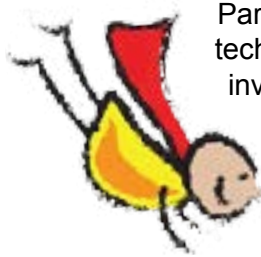
How to find mentors

To find mentors in your area try to generate local interest and to find parents who have technical backgrounds and can help.

Reach out to:

• Local business centres
• Community centres to
• Local technology companies
• Universities and colleges
• Secondary Level and High Schools

Parents and non-technical volunteers

Parents of regular attendees and non technical individuals who want to get involved often help in Dojos also.
It is also common for volunteers to learn some coding basics and be able to work with beginners as a mentor.

> Give your parents jobs to do - they may not be able to mentor, but there are loads of other things they can help with.
>
> Sandra , Dun Laoighre CoderDojo

Remote Mentoring

If you are having difficulty finding technical volunteers, and once your Dojo listing is verified on Zen, you can sign up for the IBM Cloud Mentoring scheme. IBMers will provide technical expertise to your Dojo through a virtual platform, all you need is an internet connection!

Find out more!

You can find out more about mentors and template letters to help you on Kata, the CoderDojo Community wiki here>>.

Step 3:
Find a Venue

All around the world Champions have found venues in their local communities who have given them space for free where young people can come and explore technology.

Types of Venues

• Libraries
• Local businesses
• Makerspaces
• Technology hubs
• Conference Centres
• Shopping Malls
• Canteens
• Schools
• Hotels
• Community centres
• Universities/Colleges

All around the world people are using locations like these to run free CoderDojo clubs for young people! **Dojo's cannot be hosted in private residences or homes.**
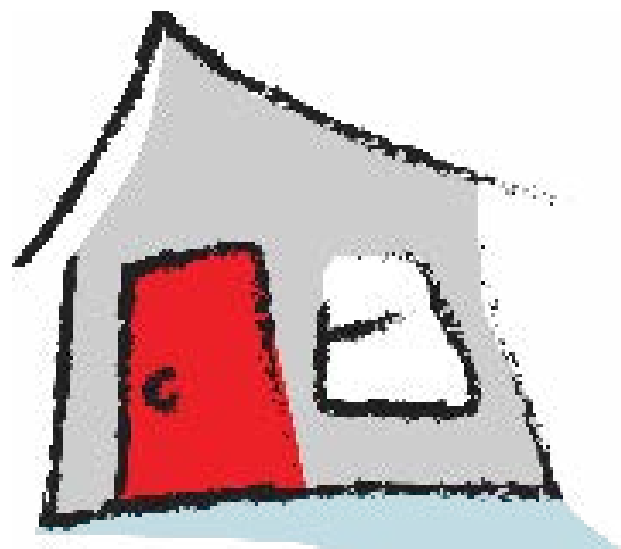
Venue Needs:

• Plug sockets for laptops
• Internet access
• Tables and chairs for the attendees.
• Computers - We recommend that the young people attending bring their own laptops or try borrow them from family but sometimes you can get a venue that has computers available for young people to use.

Venue Costs

It is crucial that you get the venue you choose to open their doors for free as this allows you to provide your CoderDojo to the youth in your community for free.

Public libraries have proven to be good spaces for holding Dojos as they are free, have a lot of space and an internet connection. You can also consider approaching businesses, hackspaces, tech hubs and conference
centres in your local area.

Occasionally there can be costs tht are out of your control such as insurance. Dojos have handled this in different ways and you can find out more about this [here>>](#)

Venue Tips

Be clear that you do not require anything special or costly; just heat, light, power, and WiFi if possible.

Bear in mind that the venue's IT person may need to know, so make sure you find someone from a high level in the organisation if you can. Often businesses have CSR schemes that are willing to support CoderDojo clubs.

Top Tip!
Often businesses and organisations have CSR schemes and are willing to use these to support Dojo with venues, mentors and pro bono supports.

Step 4:
Plan your Dojo

Planning Content

CoderDojo, fundamentally is project based and encourages young people to explore their own creativity. Young people will need to learn coding basics but with support from experienced mentors we have seen this happen in hundreds of clubs around the world.

Planning Meeting

Have a planning meeting with your mentors and think about and map out what you want to cover in your Dojo.

Learning Resources

There is a multitude of excellent resources online for learning computer programming and we encourage all Dojos to use these with their mentors in order to teach the basics and then focus the Dojo sessions on allowing the
young people to work creatively on projects of their own.

You can check out Kata our community wiki, for samples of lessons and projects that have been used in other Dojos around the world here>>

We are constantly adding new content to Kata so check back regularly for updates!

Planning Your Sessions

A little bit of planning can go a long way when it comes to your CoderDojo.

Regularity

Have a mentor planning meeting to think about things like:
• Day of the week
• Regularity (Once a week, once a month etc.)
• Length of Dojo sessions
• Will you break for summer holidays?

A lot of Dojos find it useful to use a ticketing system (like the one available to sue through Zen!) to organise their Dojos and issue tickets for attendees, mentors and parents.

Dojo's often find having a paper check - in system at the Dojo is useful also for keeping track.

Check out Zen, the CoderDojo Community Platform, for tools to manage your volunteers, atendees and issue tickets for your events!
You can see Zen at zen.coderdojo.com!

Step 5:
Promote your Dojo

Email

We recommend setting up an email address account specifically for your Dojo to deal with queries and promote your Dojo. You can get a coderdojo.com email address for your Dojo, please just ask support staff for this while going through your registration.

Website

If it is possible we also recommend setting up a website for your Dojo where you can deal with your own registration, mentor recruitment etc. It is possible as well to use a simple free blog tool such as Wordpress which will host your content and provide you with a domain. This is also a great starting project for the young people in your Dojo, to build a collaborative listing!

Social Media

Social networking is great way to join the CoderDojo community and reach out to other interested people. We recommend setting up a Facebook and Twitter account for your Dojo to connect with the global CoderDojo community and to promote your Dojo locally. Social media can also help for communicating with parents. You can also set up a Google+ or LinkedIn accounts if you wish.

Creating your Dojo Listing on Zen

Establish an online presence by adding your Dojo listing to CoderDojo Zen. When you register on Zen you will be featured on the global map of Dojos. You can register on Zen here>>.

Now get promoting!

Encourage parents, mentors, and young people to follow the Twitter account and like the Facebook and Google+ pages to stay informed. Set up an Eventbrite event for your Dojo sessions, promoting your sessions on your social network pages, and listing them in your media press release.

Remember, it is for the kids, so do not be shy! Asking parents to make contact using social media and set up a Google group. If any of that is too technical for you, get one of your team to do it! When you have an online presence, visit local schools and reach out to other parents through the teachers. Get on the local radio and into the local papers. Also, visit other existing Dojos as a visitor and share your thoughts, concerns, and experiences.

All Champions agree that **word of mouth** is best way to promote your Dojo. Spread the word throughout your community and get them talking.

Attracting Young People to your Dojo!

You can reach out to young people in your community in any number of ways. The best way to attract young people is through their parents who will be willing to bring them along.

Try contacting:
• Schools
• Youth Centres
• Youth Groups
eg. Scouts
• Parent Groups

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Support:

Please feel free to message us at any time at
info@coderdojo.com

Find us online!

http://www.coderdojo.com/

@CoderDojo

http://facebook.com/coderdojo