Running your first Code Club: Five tips for Success

It's the first session running your new Code Club and you're feeling a bit nervous. Here are our top tips to make that first session a success, and beyond.

You don't need to be an expert

One fear that prevents people starting a Code Club is the thought that they need to be a tech expert. The truth: you only need to one step ahead of your students, and after a few weeks you'll be learning and problem solving together.

To feel prepared to run your first Code Club session, do the coding project yourself. The beginner projects are quick to do, and you'll be surprised how fun and satisfying they are! Remember, being a great club leader isn't about knowing all the answers, it's about encouraging your students to problem solve with confidence.

Plan your Code Club, and you'll feel more relaxed

Before advertising your Code Club, you need to think about what a session will look like. Most Code Club sessions run for one hour and start with a small group, usually around 10 - 15 students. Once your club has been running for awhile, you can take on more students or create a second session. We can help you find volunteers to help out!

Many clubs have a set routine, which helps students know what to expect each week and encourages them to be more independent. All clubs are different, but here is a routine that might work for you:

- Students turn on their devices and, where necessary, login
- They open a browser and go to the project on [Code Club projects page](#)
- The club leader demonstrates a completed version of that week's project
- Students code the project with the help of the Club Leader and volunteers
- After forty minutes, students are given a five minute warning that the coding session will end. There's nothing worse than being told to save your work when you're right in the middle of a problem!
- With ten minutes to go, have one or two students demonstrate their project to the group and share what they learned
- Students pack away their devices

Start by showing students what they will create

Start the session by showing the students a completed version of the project they'll be doing. Completed examples can be found at the start of each project, or you can show them your own completed version! They will think you're very cool. The demonstration gives the students a clear idea of their goal for the session, and is a fun way to kick things off.

If you want, you can also demonstrate the code from a small part of the project. For example, change a value or a sound to give the students an idea of how the code works. This small piece of knowledge will give them confidence to explore.

Have all students work on the same project

When first starting a Code Club you want to make the sessions easy to run. This allows both you and the students to find your feet. Our best tip to achieve this is to have all of the students work on the same project, and to only do one project per session. For your very first Code Club start with the easiest project, 'Rock Band.' Each week move onto the next project. Once you feel like a pro running the club, students can start to complete multiple projects each session, or revisit old projects to do extra challenges.

TIP: For students who are fast workers, point them to the challenges throughout each project. If they still finish the project with time to spare, ask them to help other students.

The devil is in the details

As with any new adventure, there will be details you'll miss. So we've put our heads together to think of what they might be.

Before the first session, consider whether students can bring their own devices from home, or whether they will use devices supplied by the school or venue. Some clubs go for both! If your club is working online, consider making each student an account. For instance, when using Scratch online, students can create their own account and share their work with the Scratch community. Put aside time during the first session for students to create an account, and we think it's wise to get permission from parents first. One last detail – before each session write the WIFI password and the web address for that week's project up on a whiteboard or on pieces of paper to hand out.

TIP: If possible, have students save the WIFI password on their device and bookmark the projects page for future sessions.