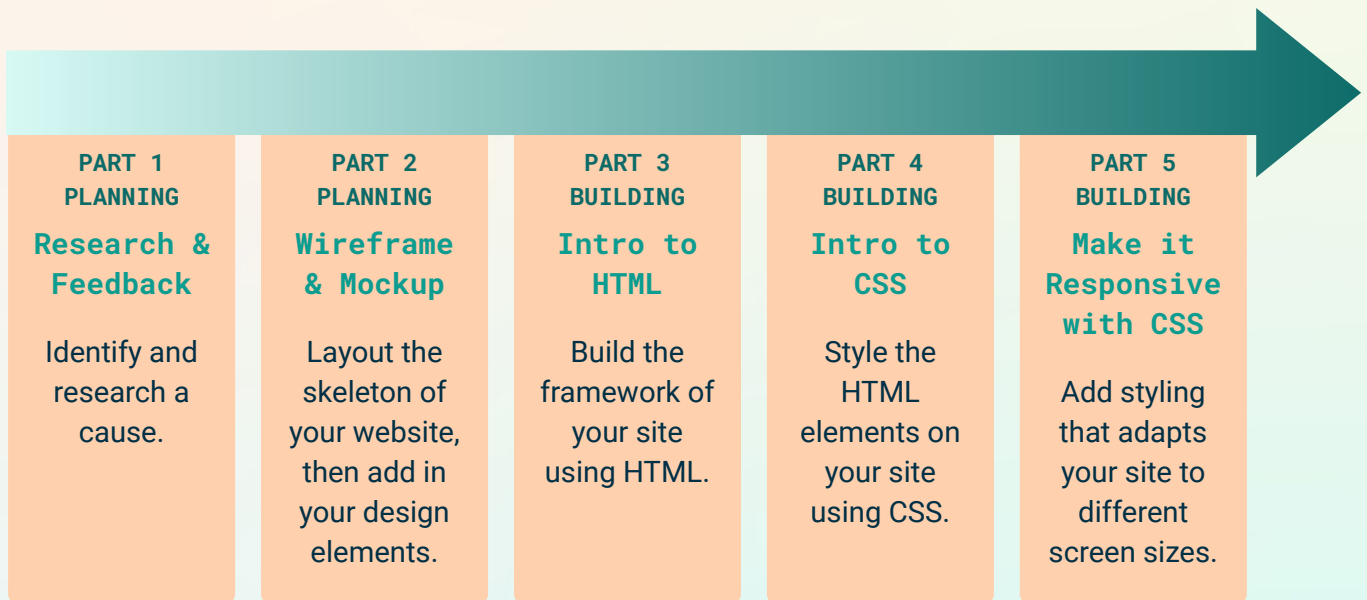# Girls Who Code At Home

Activist Toolkit Part 1
Planning: Research & Feedback

Activity Overview

Since its inception, activists have been using the web to organize around causes they care about and share ways that people can connect and take action. In this project, you will learn the basics of project planning, HTML, and CSS to build a website around a cause that is important to you.

In Part 1 of this project, you will analyze advocacy websites, identify and research a cause you care about, brainstorm the message you want to share about that cause, and create an action item list for your audience to get involved.

PART 1 PLANNING	PART 2 PLANNING	PART 3 BUILDING	PART 4 BUILDING	PART 5 BUILDING
Research & Feedback	**Wireframe & Mockup**	**Intro to HTML**	**Intro to CSS**	**Make it Responsive with CSS**
Identify and research a cause.	Layout the skeleton of your website, then add in your design elements.	Build the framework of your site using HTML.	Style the HTML elements on your site using CSS.	Add styling that adapts your site to different screen sizes.

We will not do any coding today. Instead we will use this time to plan the message of your website. While we have estimated between 95 to 145 minutes for this activity, you should feel empowered to spend as much time as you like accumulating knowledge and crafting your message. You will use the Planning Worksheet to capture your ideas. You can find this at the end of the activity packet and write in your ideas or you can make a digital copy of them using Google Docs here.

Materials

➔ Planning Worksheet.
   ◆ You can print the copy at the end of this document or you can access the digital version here.
➔ Optional: Pen/Pencil/Markers

Women in Tech Spotlight: Catt Small

Catt Small is a product designer, game maker, and developer who is currently working with Asana. She is also a co-founder of Brooklyn Gamery, a game development studio that focuses on the release and development of diversity-focused games and events.

From a young age, Catt always loved drawing, designing, and video games. When she was 10 years old she learned how to code and made her very first video game, a dress-up doll. In the video games that she played, she noticed a lack of characters that looked like her. This inspired her to tell her personal story through an adventure game.

Image Source: Catt Small

As she continued creating and programming games, Catt also noticed a disparity between female players and developers. About 48% of game players are women, but only 22% of the game industry workforce are women and only 33% of women in the gaming industry are developers. This means that only about 7% of developers in the game industry are women! This inspired Catt to co-found Code Liberation, a non-profit organization that teaches women, nonbinary, femme, and girl-identifying people to program. Not only does she teach women the skills needed to develop a game, but also shares with them the struggles and support needed to pursue their careers as developers.

Watch the video here to learn more about the gaming industry and Catt's organization Code Liberation (you only need to watch the video from timestamp 2:34 to 6:58). Learn more about Catt and her work at her website.

> **RESILIENCE**
>
> Even Catt faces difficulty when developing a game. How does it make you feel to hear about a professional's failures and challenges?

Share your responses with a family member or friend. Encourage others to read more about Catt to join in the discussion!

Step 1: Analyze Activist Websites (5-10 mins)

Before getting started on planning your project, let's look at other people and organizations who have built websites around their causes. The goal here is to get you to think critically about their design, then develop a list of criteria and attributes that you can use to inform your own website. Surveying the landscape of similar websites, apps, robots, etc. before you start a project can help you figure out what you want to include, avoid, or adapt so your project can stand out.
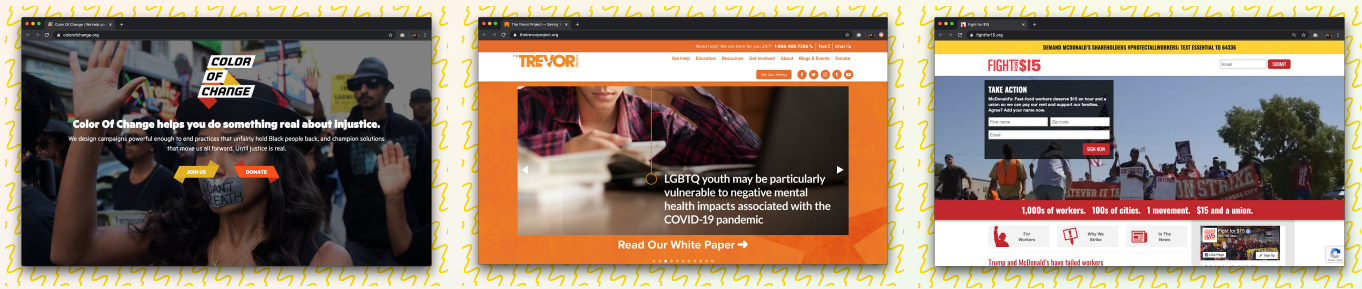
Compare and Contrast

Choose any **two** websites from the list below to compare. Alternatively, you can use the websites of activist groups you already know. Look at both websites, then reflect on the questions below for each one.

Racial Justice
The Color of Change
Black Lives Matter
Black Visions Collective

Police Brutality
Campaign Zero

Prison Abolition
No New Jails

Women in Tech
League of Women Coders
Code Liberation

Sustainability + Environment
Fashion Revolution
Sunrise Movement
Zero Hour

Disability Advocacy
Disability Visibility

Digital Privacy + Tech
Electronic Frontier Foundation
AI Now Institute

Human Rights
Human Rights Campaign
ACLU
Food Not Bombs

Refugees
International Rescue Committee
Refugees Welcome

Art + Tech for Social Change
Allied Media Projects

Economic Justice
Fight for $15
Debt Collective

Immigrant Rights
Make the Road NY

Mental Health
The Trevor Project (also LGBTQ)
notOk
ReThink

LGBTQ
GLSEN
Out in Tech

Reproductive Rights
Planned Parenthood

Indigenous Rights and Advocacy
Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace
Earth Guardians
Natives Rising

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NOTE: This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is a place to get started!

1. Their message is easy to understand. *Think about it:* Could you easily explain it to someone who has never heard of them? Why or why not? What made the message clear or not?

2. I learned something about this cause from this site. *Think about it:* What did you learn? How did you learn it? How long did it take you to find this information? If you did not learn anything, what could you improve on their site?

3. I have a clear path of action that I can take if I want to join this cause. *Think about it:* How do they encourage people to get involved? Are there multiple ways people can participate?

4. The design and layout were effective in communicating the message. *Think about it:* How did the copy (text), the imagery, the color scheme, the layout, and the use of media (video, music, et.) enhance or obscure their message? Consider the following design principles:

- → Easy to navigate
- → Proper use of color
- → Proper use of animation

- → An easy to use layout
- → Pleasing to the eye
- → Appropriate to the topic

- → The design elements don't get in the way of the content

Design Criteria

Before starting to build your site, let's consider what makes an activist website effective based on your analysis above. Think about the following questions:

- → Which website do you think was more successful overall? Why?
- → Are there any visual, textual, or interactive approaches from either site that you want to apply to your own site? Why?
- → Are there any design elements or styles you want to avoid using?
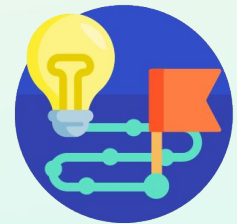
Now, write down 3-5 criteria on your **Planning Worksheet** that you want to keep in mind as you build your website. We will return to these in the next part of the project. For example, one criterion might be: *Use a short, concise title and description that people can understand quickly.*

Step 2: Identify Your Cause (5-10 mins)

A **cause** is a principle, aim, or movement that you are committed to and willing to advocate for, even in the face of opposition. Causes can be about injustices and inequalities related to social, political, racial, gender, economic, health (mental and physical), accessibility, or environmental issues. You may find that your cause has roots in more than one of these categories since they are all interrelated.

Causes can be deeply personal and local. People who fight for them have been directly impacted by them or have had friends and family members impacted.

Name Your Cause

Your idea can be broad for now or it can be highly specific. If you don't already have a cause in mind, think about these questions:

→ What challenges do you see in your community? Community doesn't have to be geographical - it can be a creative community, a learning community, etc.

→ What world do you want to live in? What is your vision for the future?

→ What frustrates you? The lack of school lunch choices? Food insecurity as a result of food deserts? The pink tax? Health care? Lack of funding for the arts? Fast fashion and lack of options for cool, sustainably-produced garments?

> It's important to keep in mind that if you choose an issue that requires a lot of emotional energy, then you should be sure to take breaks often and practice self care.

If you need some more inspiration, return to the websites and categories listed above or check out the cause lists from Do Something and Advocates for Youth. Once you feel good about your choice, fill it in under **Step 2** in your **Planning Worksheet**.

Step 3: Reflect on Your Cause (10 mins)

In this series of exercises, you will brainstorm ideas to three questions and write your ideas down in your **Planning Worksheet**. During the time allotted, you will write down as many ideas related to the question as possible. We are using time as a creative constraint here - you can always come back to these later if you like!

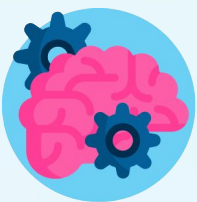| QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3
Why do you care about your cause?	**What do you know about your cause?**	**What questions do you have about your cause?**

# Step 4: Find Your Resources (10-20 mins)

Activists and supporters need to be knowledgeable about their cause. You should have an understanding of the core problem or challenge, main facts, people who are impacted, underlying structures or policies that affect your cause, and the work that is already being done by other communities. Read all of the instructions before diving into the internets.

Identify 3-5 Resources

These can be websites, people, books, etc. that you can use to find more information about your cause. They can be from the list you reviewed earlier, new ones, or ones that you have been following for a while. Document them on the **Planning Worksheet** and write a few bullet points on why they are helpful. You will use the information you find in these resources to help you over the next few sections. *Remember:* You want your resources to be credible. As you search for these resources, evaluate them with a critical eye. Think about these questions:
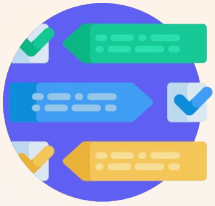
→ Who created this?

→ Why did they make it?

→ What agenda and/or goals do the creators have?

→ What is their point of view?

→ Is it a valid source?

→ Do the facts and perspectives align with other resources you have found or are there big disparities?

→ How did the message make you feel? Was it too one-sided?

Compile Your Images

As you read through resources or talk to people, compile a list of potential images you want to use in your website. If you are interviewing people, you can ask to take screenshots of virtual interviews or ask interviewees if they have images you can use. You can use your own photos or drawings as well. If you don't find all the images you need now, that's ok! You can add more later. Follow the directions on the **Planning Worksheet** to get started. (Don't forget the image description - we will use this for alt text later!)

How to Find Images You Can Use Online

You want to use images with licenses that permit you to reuse them, like Creative Commons licenses. These are licenses that are alternatives to copyrighting. Some of these licenses allow you to use images without citing - or attributing - the author, while others require attribution if you use the image. Here are a few sites that have free images and no copyrights, but you should check to see if you need to attribute the author.
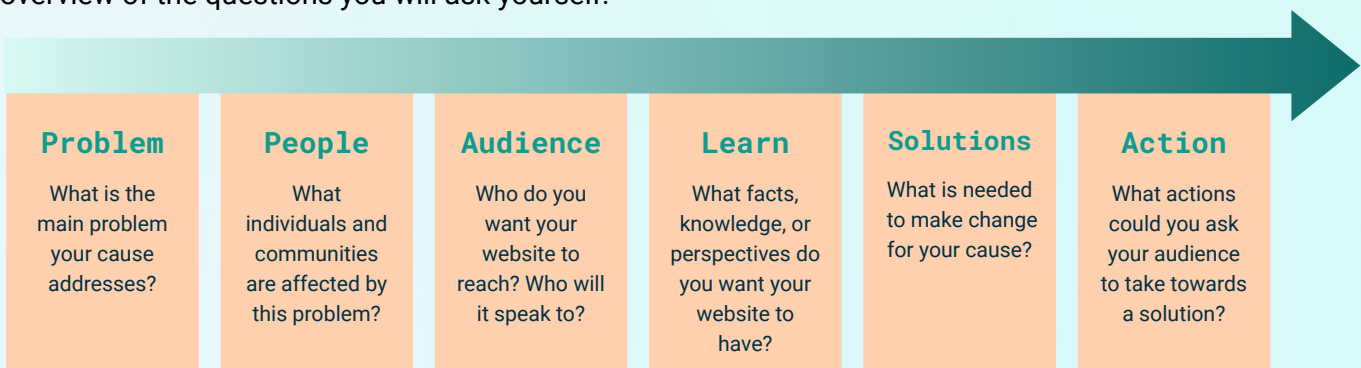
Pixabay

Unsplash

Burst

Step 5: Research Your Cause (20-40 mins)

In this section, return to the **Planning Worksheet** to research your cause and organize your ideas. Don't worry if you only have a few bullet points or rough sentences - you can refine them later. Here is an overview of the questions you will ask yourself:

Problem	People	Audience	Learn	Solutions	Action
What is the main problem your cause addresses?	What individuals and communities are affected by this problem?	Who do you want your website to reach? Who will it speak to?	What facts, knowledge, or perspectives do you want your website to have?	What is needed to make change for your cause?	What actions could you ask your audience to take towards a solution?

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Step 6: Focus Your Message (10 mins)

You have spent a lot of energy researching and reflecting on your cause. Now it's time to focus it and make it actionable.

Your Main Message

What is your main message? What is the core idea you want to share? If someone could only take one thing with them when they go, what would that be? Write it down in your **Planning Worksheet**. Below are a few examples we pulled from other websites for inspiration:

SUNRISE MOVEMENT	ACLU	COLOR OF CHANGE
We're building an army of young people to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process.	The ACLU's mission remains realizing the promise of the Bill of Rights for all and expanding the reach of its guarantees. Beyond one person, party, or side — the ACLU dares to create a more perfect union.	Color Of Change helps you do something real about injustice.

Choose an Action

One big goal for this project is to encourage your audience to take action in support of your cause. Getting people organized and involved in your cause can be a difficult task. To engage people new to the cause, it's a good idea to ask them to do something small first like sign a petition for student debt or make a card for a healthcare worker. If your audience is more familiar with the cause, you can ask them to do something bigger, like volunteer to run a local event.

Think about the actions you listed at the end of Step 5. Do any of those seem like good candidates? Choose an action and fill it in on your **Planning Worksheet.**

If you need some inspiration, visit dosomething.org. We really like how they frame this!

Action Item List

A good way to support your audience is to break down that action into a list of smaller tasks. Think about the tasks someone would need to take to accomplish that action, then list them out in the **Planning Worksheet**. We will use these items to build our checklist in future activities.

Example

- ❏ **Step 1:** If you have access to the internet, find out who your internet service provider is.
- ❏ **Step 2:** If you have access to the internet, use this site to test your internet speed.
- ❏ **Step 3:** Find the senators and their contact information here.
- ❏ **Step 4:** Call one of your senators and read or adapt the script on the left.

Step 7: Test Your Message and Get Feedback (15-20 mins)

When building anything - literally anything - it's always a good idea to get feedback on your initial work while it is still in the early stages. We call this **iterative design**. It means that we don't build everything first, only to find the finished product doesn't work or meet the needs of people who will use it. This is standard in web design and programming, so we'll follow it here!

Preparing

We will test the ideas, words, layouts, code, and usability of your website at different times. For now, we want to focus on your **ideas**. Here is what you need to think about:

Who should I test with?	What ideas should I share?	How should I test my ideas?
Try to test with 1-2 people who are close to your target audience. If you can't meet in person or on a video chat, ask them for written feedback in an email.	Test the ideas and words you created in Step 6. These will become the key message of your website. Summarize the problem, who is impacted by it, and who your audience is.	Think about how you would like to test your ideas. Do you want to have a conversation, show them your Planning Worksheet, or create a presentation?

Now we need think about how you want to get feedback. You can have an open-ended conversation, come with specific questions, or combine this approach. If you need a place to get started, here is a framework we like to use to guide conversations around feedback:

- 🌟 **Glow:** What was something you liked about the project? What was compelling? What worked based on the goals of the project?

- 🌱 **Grow:** What did you not like about the project? Where is their room to grow?

- 💭 **Question:** What questions do you have about the project? These can be questions to clarify the intent behind the idea, word, etc. or questions to probe the underlying assumptions or ideas behind the work.

- 📣 **Suggestion:** What ideas do you have to make the project stronger? Are these ideas easy to implement or do they require a lot of time to make?

If you have specific points you want feedback on, come prepared with those questions as well. These might include:

- ❏   Are my ideas easy to understand? Do they make sense?
- ❏   Are my ideas persuasive? Why or why not?
- ❏   Would you get involved if you heard about this? If yes, why? If no, what would change your mind?
- ❏   Do they stand out?
- ❏   Are my ideas factually correct?

Testing

Now that you've made preparations, it's time to actually test! Here is an agenda you can follow:

1. **Introduce the tester to your project.** Describe the goals of the project, the problem you are addressing, and what you hope to accomplish.
2. **Share the core message and action items.** This is what you wrote in Step 6.
3. **Ask for feedback.** You can ask specific questions you want to know or use the framework above as a starting place. Remember to take notes! Also be mindful of how much time your tester has and try not to go over time.
4. **Thank them!** Don't forget to thank your tester when you are finished.

Feedback Feels

In this part of the process, the goal of getting feedback is to help you make a decision. It is important to remember that this feedback is not a reflection of YOU. Learning how to receive (and give) feedback is tough, especially when it is feedback you might not want to hear. Try to remain impartial and don't get defensive if someone says something you don't like. Ask questions and listen to them. You might have an even better idea!

Step 8: Analyze and Iterate (5-10 mins)

Now that you have your feedback, it's time to use that information to make decisions. Ask yourself these questions:

➔ What feedback did you find useful or valuable?
➔ What feedback was not so helpful?
➔ What changes could you implement easily?
➔ What changes would require more time? Are they worth it?

Once you have determined what changes you want to make, revise your message. We will use this iterative process of create, test, revise, repeat throughout this project.

Step 9: Share Your Girls Who Code at Home Project! (5 mins)

We would love to see your ideas! Share your main message with us. Don't forget to tag @girlswhocode #codefromhome and we might even feature you on our account!

Planning Worksheet

Activist Toolkit Part 1
Planning: Research & Feedback