



**CANADA
LEARNING CODE**

MENTOR HANDBOOK

[Welcome](#)

[Our Programs](#)

[Ladies Learning Code](#)

[Girls Learning Code](#)

[Kids Learning Code](#)

[Teens Learning Code](#)

[Teachers Learning Code](#)

[Our Experiences](#)

[Our Code of Conduct](#)

[General Mentoring Tips](#)

[The Role](#)

[Supporting the Instructor](#)

[Day Of Tips](#)

[When you first arrive:](#)

[While the instructor is teaching/talking:](#)

[During exercise time:](#)

[Learner's Technology Skills](#)

[When Technology fails](#)

[Behavioural Issues & Extremes](#)

[Adult Program Specific Tips](#)

[Understanding Our Learners](#)

[Youth Program Specific Tips](#)

[Working With Youth Policies and Procedures](#)

[Washroom Policy](#)

[How to address the Gender Gap](#)

[Best Practices](#)

[Parents](#)

[Next Steps](#)

Welcome

First of all, we'd just like to say a big THANK YOU for taking the time to volunteer with us!

You help make these workshops possible and we couldn't be offering these types of learning opportunities without you. It means a lot to our learners to have a comfortable, inclusive and welcoming environment to learn and your role - showing up to mentor - is critical to achieving this.

This document aims to outline guidelines for mentoring learners and providing support to our lead instructors to help create a warm, friendly and inclusive learning environment for everybody.

Our Programs



✦ ladies
learning
code

✦ girls
learning
code

✦ kids
learning
code

✦ teens
learning
code

✦ teachers
learning
code

Canada Learning Code runs 5 different programs with unique experiences within them. Your Chapter Lead would have provided the Program when sharing this guide with you:

Ladies Learning Code

Our Ladies Learning Code program offers female-identified and male-identified, trans, and non-binary adults hands-on, project-based learning experiences that are designed to give

beginners the skills and confidence they need to become digital creators.

Girls Learning Code

Our Girls Learning Code program offers female-identified, trans, and non-binary youth ages 3-12 hands-on experiences designed to inspire them to see technology in a whole new light – as a medium for self-expression, and as a means for changing the world.

Kids Learning Code

Our Kids Learning Code program offers youth ages 6-12 hands-on experiences designed to inspire them to see technology in a whole new light – as a medium for self-expression, and as a means for changing the world.

Teens Learning Code

Our Teens Learning Code program offers female-identified, trans, and non-binary youth ages 13-17 opportunities to take action on ideas that will shape our future while leveraging the power of technology. Our learning experiences are much more than learning how to code. Our experiences empower teens to learn problem solving skills, how to turn ideas into reality, exposure to what a future in technology could look like, and much more.

Teachers Learning Code

Our Teachers Learning Code program has been designed for primary and middle school teachers with little to no coding experience to be able to teach coding fundamentals to their students. We offer various learning experiences such as workshops and meetups that provide educators with guides, training, and lesson planning tools to help them introduce code and computational thinking to their students.

Our Experiences

We recruit mentors for each of our programs above. Each program offers its own set of experiences listed below:

<p>Workshops</p>	<p>Workshops are the most frequently offered experience under all of our programs. They range between 3 and 6 hours and provide learners with a beginner introduction to one subject built around one hands-on project. E.g. How to build a one-page website with HTML & CSS or Game Making with Scratch. Workshops are usually led by one or two instructors, and mentors at a ratio of 4 students:1 mentor.</p>
<p>Meetups</p>	<p>Meetups are more casual than workshops and take a variety of forms. They usually don't last longer than 3 hours and they enable learners to more casually engage with interesting subjects related to tech and code. A meetup could be a short 1 hr presentation by an instructor or a special guest, a panel discussion on a subject, or simply an open hack time event where learners can come together to code on their own projects with the support of mentors.</p>
<p>Tech Days</p>	<p>Tech Days are only for Kids Learning Code and Girls Learning Code. Tech Days are full days where youth get to explore a variety of technologies in a series of stations they rotate through. One station will always be an in-class mini workshop to create something with code, and then they will rotate through other stations exploring hardware, circuitry, and unplugged activities. In the afternoon learners get to go on an excursion to visit interesting tech companies in the neighbourhood.</p>
<p>Camps</p>	<p>Camps are only for Kids Learning Code and Girls Learning Code. Taking place during the March Break and throughout the summer, camps invite youth learners to join us for a week-long learning experience built around one overarching theme. E.g. Design Camp, Entrepreneurship Camp, Game Making Camp.</p>
<p>Courses</p>	<p>Courses are only offered for Ladies Learning Code. Courses are several weeks long and enable students to gain an introduction to a collection of subjects, building on their knowledge from week to week to gain a better overall set of digital skills. E.g. Digital Skills for Beginners which offers a 7 week beginner introduction to front-end development that covers HTML, CSS, JavaScript, and WordPress</p>

Teen Club	Teen Club is an ongoing year-long experience offered to Teens Learning Code learners that enables teen girls to attend monthly sessions that combine a variety of experiences. For example, one month the teens might attend to complete an HTML workshop, and another week they will attend a tech event in the community accompanied by the Club facilitator and their Club peers. This program includes hackathons and special excursions for learners to gain practical coding skills as well as a broad understanding of the tech industry at large and their place within it. Teens are encouraged to be critical thinkers and gain an understanding of their own opportunities and ability to influence change with tech.
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Our Code of Conduct

Before mentoring at any of our experiences, we ask that mentors review and agree to embody our Code of Conduct while mentoring at our experiences.

Code of Conduct

What makes this organization so special, is our community. This Code of Conduct is built on the understanding and commitment that we can and we should uphold ourselves to the highest standards that are designed to strengthen community trust and confidence in our work and the experiences we deliver and participate in.

The principles set out in the Code of Conduct guide the work we do. This code applies equally to employees, contractors, Chapter Leads, instructors, mentors, volunteers and anyone that participates in our community. As you read through the code you will see that it does not provide all the answers; instead it acts as a reference point for questions, and reminds us how our core values can be applied in various situations.

This code of conduct applies to all spaces managed by Canada Learning Code. This includes all in-person and online spaces such as workshops, meetups and Facebook communities.

General Mentoring Tips

The Role

As a mentor, your role is so important to help provide individualized support for our learners, help them gain exposure to the industry, feel safe and comfortable learning new things and have fun.

At each experience, there will always be a lead instructor there to deliver the curriculum and your role as a mentor is to help answer specific questions, provide support and ensure everyone is on track.

We think that teaching something new to someone is as exciting as it gets.

Get excited

Be inspiring

Have an open-mind

Be confident

Be resourceful

Stay positive

Supporting the Instructor

As a mentor, we ask that you support the Instructor throughout the workshop. Although there are many different ways of doing the same thing, try to always teach what the Instructor is teaching. If a learner is not feeling challenged, it is your opportunity to take the learner to a more difficult level! Ask the lead for extra challenges they could show them, or come up with your own.

Day Of Tips

When you first arrive:

Usually there is one mentor per table of 2-4 learners. Introduce yourself to your table and check to see if the learners have all the software and slides downloaded and are powered up and connected to wifi.

While the instructor is teaching/talking:

Speak quietly if helping while the instructor is talking (common feedback from learners is that it is distracting). You may need to crouch down and/or try not to block the projector. If the issue can't be fixed quickly & quietly and requires additional explanation, tell the learner you will come back during the next exercise.

Opinions are always welcome but make sure to support the lead instructor and the content. Raise your hand before speaking to avoid interrupting or speak to the instructor during a break/exercise if there is an issue, question or opinion that you'd like the class to be aware of.

During exercise time:

Not all learners are comfortable initiating/asking questions. You may have to approach them or make yourself physically available by staying within speaking distance.

Give the learners time to figure things out but you can use non-verbal cues like catching their eye and smiling or just say something like "how's everything going here?" That will help to make learners feel open to asking for help.

We want it to be a social environment for everybody but avoid having prolonged chats with other mentors during exercise time as the learners will be reluctant to interrupt conversations to ask for help.

Learner's Technology Skills

Many learners are still learning how to type, navigate a computer, and troubleshoot technology. We try to keep a hands-off approach as often as possible. Guide a learner by pointing to the screen and verbalizing your instructions.

If a learner is struggling and becoming frustrated, offer to show the answer, but tell them to watch closely. You can even delete the answer (or go back a step) and have them repeat what you did with you guiding.

When Technology fails

If a computer isn't working the way it should and a learner is feeling frustrated, acknowledge that this is common. Try to troubleshoot the problem together (i.e. ask what they would do if this happened at home. Would they quit and reopen the program? Restart the computer?). If the problem does not solve itself, try using Google as a resource! It is important to show the learner how to be resourceful for the future. As a last resort, ask the Instructor or Chapter Lead to help you.

Behavioural Issues & Extremes

If at any time you feel uncomfortable or like you are being treated unfairly, please report your concerns to a Canada Learning Code Team Member. We want everyone to be having fun and learning together, mentors and instructors included.

If a learner is being extremely disruptive, negative or like a bully, and isn't responding to redirection to the task from you, please get a lead to help out and learn from how they respond to the situation.

If a learner discloses anything regarding the compromise of their own safety to you, (abuse, self-harm, etc.) Please report directly to a Canada Learning Code Team Member as soon as possible.

Adult Program Specific Tips

Understanding Our Learners

The aim of our workshops are to be beginner friendly. However, within the category "beginner" there is still a wide range of knowledge and experience. Most learners fall into one of three categories:

Group 1: Little to basic computer knowledge

Many learners at this level are usually not used to using keyboard shortcuts, so when suggesting help, make sure to provide an additional option in addition to keyboard shortcuts so the learner can choose an option more comfortable for them. We want to encourage general computer proficiency but also ensure the teaching style is in line with their current level of knowledge. For example, say something like:

*"To create a new file, you can use **cmd/ctrl + N** OR **File > New.**"*

See below for more specific tasks learners may need assistance with.

- Opening zip files. On PCs, remind learners to *extract all*.
- Downloading software.
- Refreshing the browser
 - some learners are not aware of the reload button and will load the HTML file every time a change is made resulting in many tabs open
 - many of the workshops include a “setting up your workflow” exercise to help ensure they stick to reloading the same browser tab to avoid confusion
- Learners may need practice getting used to switching between applications (e.g. text editor and browser). One option is to arrange/resize the apps in such a way that both apps can be easily selected rather than minimized or moved. Example below:

Group 2: No coding experience but proficient in general computer skills

Learners at this level are the “middle” group that the instructor will be tailoring their pacing of the content to.

Most of the focus will be on helping them with the specific course content related issues. They will be more open to incorporating keyboard shortcuts into their workflow (or already use some) but may still be unfamiliar with code specific keys, like the angled & curly brackets, since those symbols are not commonly used outside of coding languages.

You may need to still look out for some issues related to general computer use as Group 1.

Group 3: Some coding knowledge or has attended a previous workshop

Learners at this level may need some extra tasks to keep them engaged as they may finish the exercises early.

Try not to stray away from the flow of the course content but you can suggest extra tasks that build on the current concept. For example, if the rest of the class is working on adding basic links to their projects, you can show them how to make links open in a window or email link. It's still on topic but gives the learner a little extra to keep them busy and engaged.

Other suggestions:

- show some text editor tricks
- show some extra resources (stack overflow, etc)

Tips for all groups:

- Show them how to increase/decrease the font-size of the text editor (cmd/ctrl + or -)
- Syntax errors - check obvious stuff first (file saved, spelling mistakes, missing semicolons/brackets/etc)
- get learners to write one or two lines of code at a time (rather than copy and paste a whole block of code), then check their work, to help reduce errors

When helping with troubleshooting, try asking directed questions that will help the learner come to their own conclusions. Examples below:

- What comes next?
- Let's take a look at line x - do you see anything missing from there?
- Here we closed the "p" tag with a forward slash, what should we do with the "h1" tag? (help them recognize patterns by pointing to examples)
- Use hints rather than giving answers - For example, say something like :
"How would you 'float' something to the left with CSS?"
rather than
"Use float:left;"

You're still basically giving them the answer but try framing it in a way that helps them feel like they are coming to the conclusion on their own.

The workshops also aim to create confidence in technology and many of our learners are interested in coding in a general sense and may not want to pursue a career in programming.

So avoid overly technical explanations unless the learners ask for more info.

Also keep in mind that our workshops and lesson plans are organized into step-by-step, project based instructions so it's important to support the content strategy to ensure the learners stay on track.

Youth Program Specific Tips

As leads, mentors, and volunteers, your goal is to help youth use technology to...

- Develop confidence
- Unleash creativity
- Feel comfortable
- Be empowered

Canada Learning Code aims to provide a unique experience for our learners by emphasizing collaboration and empowerment through technology. We expect learners to work together, ask questions, stay present, and try their best. Setting clear expectations is one of many ways to be proactive in encouraging positive behaviour from our youth.

Creating a positive learning environment can also come through modeling appropriate behaviours, such as active listening and engaging each and every learner in your group.

Also, praise, praise, praise! Leads, mentors, and volunteers should give specific and positive praise to learners throughout the workshop to encourage them as they go. For example:

- *I really like how... you're listening and looking up front*
- *Thank you for... keeping your laptop closed while listening to instructions*
- *You're doing a great job... listening to your group members during discussion*
- *Nice job... helping your partner figure out that problem*
- *That was an awesome job... positively responding to technical issues*
- *Thanks so much...for sharing that piece of insight! Does anyone else want to share their experiences with the group?*

Working With Youth Policies and Procedures

As a not-for-profit, we value the safety of our community of learners, our employees and volunteers. We want to take reasonable measures to safeguard people and assets from potential harm. Therefore, we've implemented a policy on background checks for staff and volunteers working in our child-only youth programs. Youth mentors, aged 18 or older, are asked to have a cleared a Police Records Check (PRC) completed once every five years. Your point of contact will tell you if this is required. If you need to obtain a PRC then we'll send you details via email. Canada Learning Code will absorb all related expenses for a PRC. PRC's are held on file for five years.

Washroom Policy

Learners 12 years of age and younger are not to be sent to the washroom alone, but should be accompanied by another learner 12 years of age or younger. To protect all

parties involved, mentors and volunteers are not permitted to be in the washroom at the same time as learners.

How to address the Gender Gap

In short, don't. Unless a kid brings it up to you, this is not something that we make a part of program experience.

Women have not historically been associated with technology and its progression. Canada Learning Code wants to make sure that doesn't stay true for the generations to come.

Young women and girls are often unaware of any stigma that exists in the technology industry, and it's our job to keep it that way! Even a compliment given to a girl for succeeding in a male dominated activity that addresses gender can be confusing. Young women and girls often already have equal ability with technology as young men and boys.

Best Practices

We are here to promote a safe, fun and healthy learning environment.

If a learner is disengaged or being disruptive, get the learner back on track. This could be through reminding them of the task or learning objective, or reminding them of the camp's rules and providing incentives for good behaviour.

Eye contact and body language are very important. Learners will behave based on your actions. If you are slouched and looking at your phone, learners will assume you are bored and not interested in helping them.

Instead of asking a learner to stop doing something disruptive, try and direct them and encourage them in the task at hand. If a learner is disengaged, for example: "I can't do this, can you just do it for me". Ignore the request and redirect to steps they can take. For example: "I think it starts with this. Let's give it a shot."

Remember: learners will remember how you deal with other learners. We want them to see early on that we don't allow or promote a negative learning environment

Recognize, out-loud, learners who are being awesome, both individually and to the group. Try to remember names, a learner will respond better when you say: "Thanks for closing your laptop screen, Brandon".

Parents

Before and after the program you will have the opportunity to interact with parents. Be open and say “hi” to parents. They can tell you how their child is doing that day, and if they might have a different learning style than other children. This makes it easier to help the learner out later.

Parents are always curious to know what their kids are learning and will really want to hear from you! Try and encourage the learner in front of their parent regarding their progress that day.

Parents often want to hear all about hard skills, but may forget about all the soft skills. Remember to tell them that their child has learned things like teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, and other social skills. Always mention their child’s hard won successes in any area.

Next Steps

We recommend that you arrive to the experience you’re mentoring about 20-30 mins beforehand to settle in and to help welcome learners. And remember to HAVE FUN!

Thank you so much for volunteering your time and showing support for Canada Learning Code. We couldn’t do this without you!

If you have any feedback after your experience - we’d appreciate hearing from you at feedback@canadalearningcode.ca!