



Girls Who Code At Home

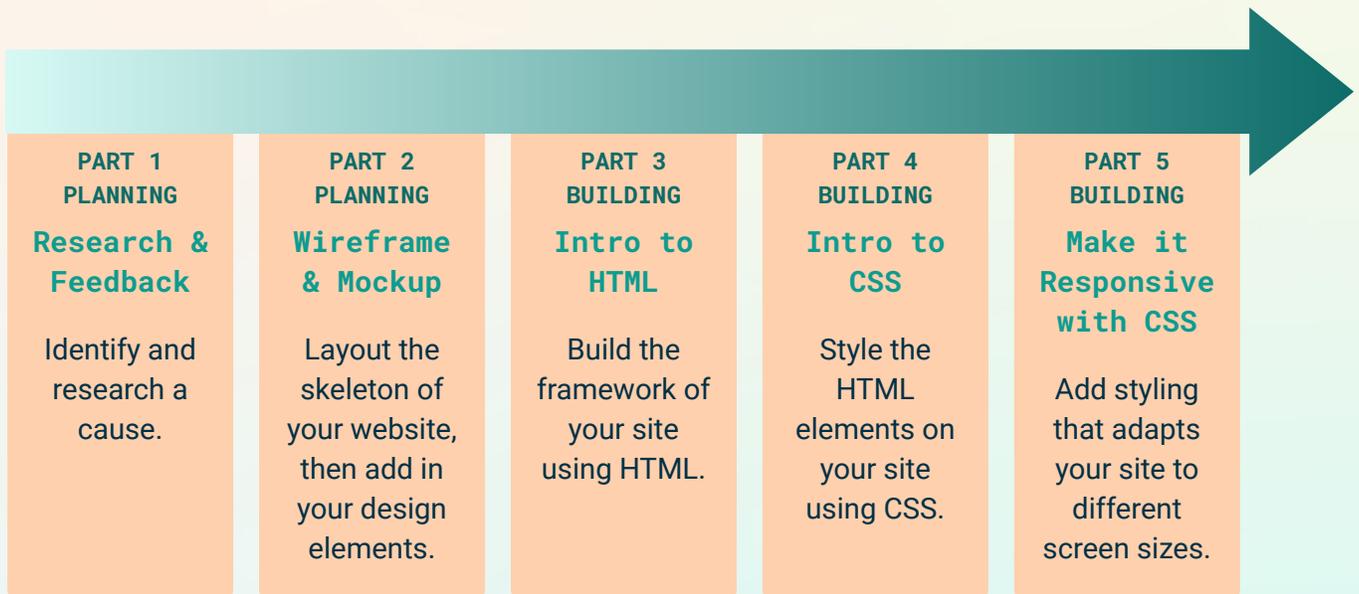
Activist Toolkit Part 1

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.



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



Image Source: [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.

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](#)

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

Step 1: Analyze Activist Websites (cont.)

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?

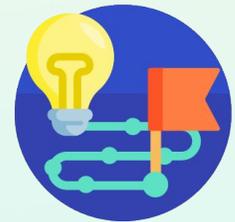
4. The design and layout were effective in communicating the message. *Think about it:* How did the copy (text), the imagery, the color scheme, the layout, and the use of media (video, music, et.) enhance or obscure their message? Consider the following design principles:

- 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.

Step 2: Identify Your Cause (cont.)

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

Why do you care about your cause?

QUESTION 2

What do you know about your cause?

QUESTION 3

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 internet.

Step 4: Find Your Resources (cont.)

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:



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

We're building an army of young people to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process.

ACLU

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

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?

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.

What ideas should I share?

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.

How should I test my ideas?

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?

Step 7: Test Your Message and Get Feedback (cont.)

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



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

Instructions. Use this worksheet to plan your website. Note that the steps in this worksheet correspond to the steps in the activity guide.

Step 1: Design Criteria

Step 2: Identify Your Cause

What is your cause?

Describe the cause your website will focus on in a few words or a sentence.



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

Step 3: Reflect on Your Cause

Why do you care about your cause? (Set a timer to 3 minutes)

Take **3** minutes to brain dump your thoughts. Try to be as specific as possible. If you're having trouble getting started, try this automatic writing exercise. Use the sentence starter below for each new sentence. Once your ideas start to flow, stop using it!

I care about _____ because...

What do you know about your cause? (Set a timer to 2 minutes)

Take **2** minutes to brain dump your thoughts. Try to be as specific as possible. If you're having trouble getting started, use the sentence starter below for each new sentence. Once your ideas start to flow, stop using it!

I know...



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

What questions do you have about your cause? (Set a timer to 1 minute)

Take **1** minute to brain dump your thoughts. Try to be as specific as possible. If you're having trouble getting started, use the sentence starter below for each new sentence. Once your ideas start to flow, stop using it!

I would like to know...

Step 4: Find Your Resources

Find 3-5 resources that can help you learn more about your cause. You will use the information you found in these resources to help you over the next few sections. If you have more than three resources, copy and paste the template above or write on a separate sheet of paper to add more.

Remember: As you read through resources or talk to people, collect images you like, take screenshots of virtual interviews that you could use with their permission, ask interviewees if they have images you can use, etc.

Resource 1: _____

In 1-2 sentences or a few bullet points, describe why this resource is helpful to you and could be helpful to others.



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

Resource 2: _____

In 1-2 sentences or a few bullet points, describe why this resource is helpful to you and could be helpful to others.

Resource 3: _____

In 1-2 sentences or a few bullet points, describe why this resource is helpful to you and could be helpful to others.

Resource 4: _____

In 1-2 sentences or a few bullet points, describe why this resource is helpful to you and could be helpful to others.



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

Images

If you are writing on this worksheet, include the location where you found the image, the URL if it's not too long, and a brief description of it to help you remember what it is. You should include at least 3 images. See the example below.

Image Location and/or Link to Image	Image Description
Archive.org https://archive.org/details/C-1960-53672	Black and white photograph of a young woman sitting at a desk with an old computational device.



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

Step 5: Research Your Cause

Use the resources you found and your own experience to answer the questions below. If you are writing in your answers and run out of space, use another sheet of paper.

What is the problem you are addressing?

Think about the main challenges to your cause and the communities that are affected by them. What are the major obstacles to finding or implementing positive, lasting change? These can range from deep structural and systemic issues to concrete daily interactions. Choose one of them that you want to focus on and describe it in a few sentences.

Who is impacted?

Think about the people and communities affected by the problems you just named and list them here. It can be one community, a group of people, etc. Describe who is impacted in a few sentences below.



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

What audience do you want to reach?

Who do you want your website to speak to? Who can help you advocate for your cause and help you realize change? Describe who they are in a few sentences or bullet points here. (Note: These may or may not be the same as the people who are impacted. For example, the people who are impacted might be local community members, but you might want to target policy makers.)

What do you want your audience to learn?

What facts, knowledge, or perspectives will support the message of your website? What misconceptions might your audience have about your cause? Describe them in a few sentences or bullet points here.



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

What are some potential solutions to the problem?

What is needed to make change? Are these short-term solutions or long-term solutions? List a few ideas you have below.

What types of actions can people take to work towards a solution?

Are these one time actions or things people would need to do regularly? Can people do them individually or do they need more support? List 3 or more actions your audience could take to make change for your cause.



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

Step 6: Focus Your Message

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

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 here.

What action will you ask your audience to take and why?

I will ask my audience to...(this is your call to action or CTA)

This action is important / useful / compelling because... (convince them that they should take the action)



Planning Worksheet (Print)

GWC at Home: Activist Toolkit

Here are the steps they need to take to complete the action:

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5: