

# BBC Connected Studio – Coding for Teenagers

## 1. What's the challenge?

### Inspiring young people to realise their creative potential through technology

The UK is facing a severe skills shortage in the technology sector and the BBC wants to work with partners to help change that. Martha Lane Fox recently said: “We are going to need a million more people who can work in the technology sector over the next ten years. We don't have them. We've got to help people be encouraged to go into that sector.” So we want to inspire Britain's next generation of storytellers, problem solvers and entrepreneurs to get involved with technology and unlock the enormous creative potential it offers, both for each individual and for all corners of UK industry.

Digital literacy is a highly valuable skill – and in future could arguably become as essential to a successful career as reading or writing. Some young people in Britain have already discovered the power and range of their creative potential in coding, programming and digital technology, but many have yet to try these things. The BBC and its partners can play a valuable role in inspiring young people to develop new skills; therefore the challenge in this brief is to **create an appealing digital experience with a coding component** for teenagers aged 13-16. We want to put digital inspiration at the heart of this brief.

## 2. Who's the audience?

Your challenge is to make sure we inspire not just teenagers in general, but **teenage girls** aged 13-16 in particular. That's because only 18% of computing professionals are women (E-Skills, 2012) and the number of female computer science graduates is down 13% (HESA, 2013). A study for [Nesta](#) (TNS, 2014) suggests girls are less likely to make things using digital technology. They are also twice as unlikely to learn about it outside of school.

Ideally, we're looking for ideas that appeal to both boys and girls, however, we're particularly keen to see ideas that appeal to girls. It's always difficult to generalise but here are some insights that could help you understand our audience:

### Constantly connected

Teenagers stay in constant contact. Unsurprisingly, mobile phones are more important to them than any other device, even TV. Girls are particularly prolific communicators; in 2012, 12-15 year old girls sent 35% more texts than boys (Ofcom, 2012).

### Visual self-expression

Teenagers can be [highly visual](#), and use photography and video to express feelings, forge friendships and share their lives (Boyd, 2014). Examples include the appeal of [emojis](#) to express emotion; Vine to easily edit and share video and Snapchat or Instagram to share photos.

### Developing identities

Teenagers become increasingly conscious of shaping the way they present themselves to others (Sherbert research for BBC, 2013). Social media now plays a key role in how they maintain and develop their identity (Doster, 2013). For example, the photos that they stage, share and comment on help them express not only who they are but also how they want to be seen. Some also use social media to connect with cultural icons and earn kudos from their peers.

## 3. What do we want you to do?

### We think the best way to appeal to teenagers is through their existing passions.

Given that coding does not currently interest the majority of 13-16 year olds, we need an idea with coding *in* it rather than something outwardly and obviously about coding. For this audience, coding should be a means to end rather than the end in itself.

We need to build something valuable and useful that feeds their interests. It should be credible, deliver a sense of achievement, and be shareable. It could enhance a teenager's sense of self, perhaps by building status or enabling self-expression.

#### What to avoid

- There is [evidence](#) of some resistance to gender specific propositions, so overtly targeting girls could fail to connect with them
- Your idea should be able to stand alone. We might use BBC programmes to promote it, but it's better not to be reliant on BBC content
- We have an idea in development that includes an invention game using BBC content and characters, so please avoid replicating this.

#### Don't be afraid to...

- Use humour or silliness – some of the most shareable and likeable things in the digital world are light-hearted
- Experiment with narrative – this age group loves telling and following stories
- Create a proposition that has 'real world' value so they get to see the fruits of their efforts and feel recognised for them
- Think about ways to engage the vlogger networks on YouTube who [we know](#) are increasingly popular
- Help them solve everyday problems or get to know themselves and each other better
- Tap into their passions – we know teenagers love music, leisure, fashion and style. You can find out more about our research at the briefing event on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

## 4. Creative 'ways in' to the challenge:

### “Make me a creative genius in just a few clicks”

We know that gaining mastery can be a strong motivation for people and teenagers are no exception. In the same way Instagram turns snapshots into art, could your idea make someone feel instantly proud enough to share something they've just created?

### “Look at me (and me and me)”

How could coding help a teenager express their feelings and identity while also earning likes, followers and fame? What might be the coding equivalent of writing your favourite band on your pencil-case or carving your initials into a tree?

### “I want one of them”

What is the digital equivalent of the Rubik's cube? It was an unlikely playground craze based on mathematics which gripped a generation. What's the coding meme that everyone else could be doing, that you'd feel left out of if you didn't join in?