

# A Parent's Guide to Hackathons

<http://mlh.io/parent-hackathon-guide>

Hackathons have grown to become a global student movement. Attracting all students, from absolute beginners to experienced developers, hackathons fast-track the development process and provide students with valuable technical and career skills. Hackathons are a fun way to teach students how to turn their ideas into real applications. In addition, sponsors regularly send professional mentors and recruiters to each hackathon. Students who attend hackathons get to forge friendships, interact with mentors and recruiters, learn to code, and prototype a new idea.

## What is a “hackathon”?

Not to be confused with illegal and unauthorized programming, hacking in this context means quickly and intelligently creating a real application that others can use. Teams of two to six students work together over a weekend to develop a product, learning about new technologies and making friends on the way. Without an instructor lecturing them, attendees self-teach and learn how to independently research new technologies and fix problems they encounter. Expert mentors from professional development backgrounds work through the night to help students with their projects. Winners are chosen, prizes are dealt, and the top teams give a live demo of their project on stage at the conclusion.

## Who can attend hackathons?

Our hackathons are open to all students, from experienced programmers to students who have never written a line of code. Students of all disciplines are welcome. The environment at hackathons is collaborative, rather than competitive, and students spend the event helping each other and sharing their knowledge. There are always workshops and technology talks throughout the event.

## What is Major League Hacking (MLH)?

Major League Hacking is the official student hackathon league. We organize the official hackathon seasons in North America and Europe and support the 50,000 student hackers who compete annually in student hackathons. MLH representatives attend all sanctioned hackathons to ensure that the event runs without any problems. Run almost completely by individuals with prior experience organizing hackathons and attending hackathons, MLH ensures that student organizers are given expert help in order to guarantee the success and safety of their event. MLH facilitates a link between the technology industry and education.

*Hackathons are the best way to get started programming.*

## Why are hackathons important?

Countless students get to spend a weekend having fun, meeting new people, and preparing themselves for technical careers. Hackathons provide a real-world experience for students, as they compete in teams to create a product. Students have a chance to gain time management skills, along with technical expertise and new connections. In addition, students get to spend one-on-one time with expert mentors who spend the hackathon teaching students new technical skills along with helping students with their projects. Hackathons change students' lives.

There are not nearly enough trained computer scientists to fulfill the need for programmers. According to Code.org, there will be 1,000,000 more computing jobs than CS students by 2020. This high paying field is struggling to find trained students right out of college. Without regard to a student's race or gender, hackathons are inclusive and remain open for any student to attend.

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Have other questions?  
Contact MLH at [hi@mlh.io](mailto:hi@mlh.io)



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