

CoderDojo Athenry – Notes on Belt Awarding Procedure

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We award belts once per year.

Belts to be awarded May 2015:

- Scratch Beginners/Intermediate (led by Martha)
 - White belts for ongoing participation
 - Yellow Scratch belts for competent coders
- Scratch Advanced [Oliver's group]
 - Blue Advanced Scratch belts
 - For those in 2nd year of this group, either Green also or Blue + Advanced Cert
- Python [Declan's group]
 - 1 Yellow Python belt
 - 3 Blue Python belts - advanced
- Minecraft Modding [Kieran/Michael]
 - Green Minecraft Modding belts for creating code for substantial mods in Java/JavaScript and publishing them online. The mods must have multiple features, use decisions, loops and variables. Typically more than 100 lines of code.
 - PURPLE Minecraft Modding belts. For this, they will have to have a green Minecraft belt already, and then develop and release a large collaborative mod – it requires teamwork, planning and implementation, as well as significant technical knowledge, and each person has to be able to explain their individual contribution as well as how it fits in the overall mod. The mod development will take 8-10 weeks in total.

Ranks/Colours:

Our ranks so far are:

1. White
2. Yellow
3. Blue
4. Green
5. Purple [TBC]

For reference, here are Karate belts according to <http://www.ski-ireland.com/viewpage.php?memid=9>

- 9th Kyu - White Belt
- 8th Kyu - Yellow Belt
- 7th Kyu - Orange Belt
- 6th Kyu - Green Belt
- 5th Kyu - Blue Belt
- 4th Kyu - Purple Belt
- 3rd Kyu - Brown Belt
- 2nd Kyu - Brown Belt
- 1st Kyu - Brown Belt

- 1st Dan to 10th Dan Black Belt

Belts awarded May 2014

- 3 White belts for ongoing participation
- 55 Yellow Scratch belts for competent coders [Martha's group]
- 15 Blue Advanced Scratch belts [Oliver's group]
- 1 Yellow Python belt [Declan's group]
- 3 Blue Python belts [Declan's group - advanced]
- 10 Green Minecraft Modding belts for creating and publishing Java/JavaScript mods online [my group – advanced and shared online]

Overview of Process (Email from Jun 2013 sent to another CoderDojo)

I attach two presentations that we used about 3 weeks apart – preparing for first belts and awarding them. There is of course a lot of overlap between them.

The key point is that we didn't want anyone to be scared or anxious about the process, so 2 or 3 weeks before actually awarding the belts, we went through all of this, we posted the info on our blog (<http://cdathenry.wordpress.com/2012/12/05/beginners-scratch-challenge-8-start-preparing-to-earn-your-first-belt/>), and sent emails to everyone.

On the Belts Day itself, we left the Sample Questions slide up before we started going around to kids, so that both mentors and kids could see them. While we were completely open and up-front, we were also reasonably firm – if somebody couldn't show us their own code and explain some features, they got a white belt and congratulations, and were reassured that they would be able to apply for a yellow belt soon if they stuck around. Likewise, we turned down a couple of requests from parents along the lines of “my boy won't be around on your belts day, but can you just give him one anyway?”

We had quite a few kids to go through, so we had 3 or 4 teams of 2 mentors each, and we asked all teams to watch the first pair of mentors do their first couple of assessments, so that everyone would approach it consistently. Mentors worked in pairs, kneeling down by the kids and making every effort to keep it relaxed.

We noted our decisions on the spot but didn't announce them to the kids. At the end we called everybody up one by one and handed them a belt, either white or yellow, without saying which, so that the small number who didn't get yellows were not singled out.

For blue belts, we took a different approach with 16 multiple-choice questions that recapped on a mixture of general programming and Scratch concepts and specific tasks they had worked on. We gave a belt to everyone who got at least 12 right, which I think was everybody in that group.