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Have You Completed Your "Hour of Code"?

The Game Connoisseur

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Computer Science is slowly making its way to the masses, and is no longer a domain reserved for nerds with thick-rimmed glasses taped in the middle. The core of computer science is logical thinking and the ability to "code," and to help computers to communicate effectively, and this is not something reserved for any one group of people. And like it or not, computers are all around us, in our phones, our cars, our microwaves, and on our desktops. The White House has taken the need for Computer Science learning head-on, and the President's 2016 "Computer Science for All" initiative hopes to "empower all American students from kindergarten through high school to learn computer science and be equipped with the computational thinking skills they need to be creators in the digital economy, not just consumers, and to be active citizens in our technology-driven world."

Nine out of ten parents agree that they would like their children to be taught Computer Science in school, so this is not a partisan issue. The root of the problem is that we have a marginally digitally literate population, and teachers, for the most part, are not equipped to teach these skills to their students. Fortunately there are a number of for-profit and nonprofit organizations out there that are looking to help. Of particular note is Code.org, which launched in 2013 with the goal of delivering simple, easy to understand Computer Science lessons for students. They have significant partners, including Amazon, Apple, Disney, Facebook, Microsoft, and many more, allowing users to experience intellectual property like Frozen, Star Wars, Flappy Bird, Minecraft, and Angry Birds. The core experience at the website is for users to complete their own "Hour of Code" using any of the various themed activities. Choose the "Flappy Bird" theme and in one hour you'll be able to make your own game. Further, you can share the link to the game with your friends, and they can test it out right on their computer or smartphone. The lessons are extremely well done, and allow for an easy entry into basic coding, allowing anyone in the US (children and adults) to at least experience coding at a basic level. It is especially useful for schools, as it provides a free, easy, and well crafted entry into basic Computer Science. Once the initial Hour of Code is done it also offers more advanced lessons. So my question to you is simple: "Have you completed your Hour of Code?"