



Lowerhouse Junior School Computing Overview Sheet



Year 6 – Programming (Variables in games)

National
Centre for
Computing
Education

Rationale: This unit explores the concept of variables in programming through games in Scratch. First, pupils will learn what variables are, and relate them to real-world examples of values that can be set and changed. Pupils will then use variables to create a simulation of a scoreboard. In Lessons 2, 3, and 5, which follow the Use-Modify-Create model, pupils will experiment with variables in an existing project, then modify them, then they will create their own project. In Lesson 4, pupils will focus on design. Finally, in Lesson 6, pupils will apply their knowledge of variables and design to improve their game in Scratch.

Progression: This unit assumes that pupils will have some prior experience of programming in Scratch. Specifically, they should be familiar with the programming constructs of sequence, repetition, and selection. These constructs are covered in the Year 3, 4, and 5 National Centre for Computing Education programming units respectively. Each year group includes at least one unit that focuses on Scratch.

Overview:

Lesson 1: To define a 'variable' as something that is changeable
Lesson 2: To explain why a variable is used in a program
Lesson 3: To choose how to improve a game by using variables
Lesson 4: To design a project that builds on a given example
Lesson 5: To use my design to create a project
Lesson 6: To evaluate my project

Subject Knowledge

Lesson 1: In this lesson, pupils will be introduced to variables. Pupils will see examples of real-world variables (score and time in a football match), then they will explore them in a Scratch project. Pupils will then design and make their own project including variables. Finally, pupils will identify that variables are named and can be letters (strings) as well as numbers.

Lesson 2: In this lesson, pupils will understand that variables are used in programs, and that they can hold a single value at a time. Pupils will complete an unplugged task that will demonstrate the process of changing variables. Next, they will explore why it is important to name variables, then they will apply their learning in a Scratch project in which they will make, name, and update variables

Lesson 3: In this lesson, pupils will apply the concept of variables to enhance an existing game in Scratch. They will predict the outcome of changing the same change score block in different parts of a program, then they will test their predictions in Scratch. They will also experiment with using different values in variables, and with using a variable elsewhere in a program.

Lesson 4: This lesson focuses on the design elements of programming. For the majority of the tasks, pupils will be working at the algorithmic level of abstraction. Pupils will first design the sprites and backgrounds for their project, then they will design their algorithms to create their program flow

Lesson 5: In this lesson, pupils will implement the algorithms that they created in Lesson 4 as code. In doing this, they will identify variables in an unfamiliar project and learn the importance of naming variables. They will also have the opportunity to add another variable to enhance their project.

Lesson 6: This lesson gives pupils the opportunity to build on the project that they created in Lesson 5. As the lesson develops, the scaffolding is gradually removed, so that the last main activity is without constraints. Finally, pupils will evaluate each other's projects

Assessment/Key Skills

Formative assessment

Assessment opportunities are detailed in each lesson plan. The learning objectives and success criteria are introduced in the slide deck at the beginning of each lesson, and then reviewed at the end. Pupils are invited to assess how well they feel they have met the learning objective using thumbs up, thumbs sideways, or thumbs down. We recommend the use of teacher accounts in Scratch to help with assessment throughout this unit. For guidance on setting up teacher accounts, please [visit the Scratch website](https://scratch.mit.edu/educators/faq) (scratch.mit.edu/educators/faq).

Summative assessment

Please see the assessment question and answer documents for this unit.