



Please Cite Accordingly:

Hammond, A. (2016). The total beginner's guide to Twine. *Regional-DH.SDSU.edu*

**Goal:** The goal of this project is to provide simple, easy-to-follow, progressively sophisticated online tutorials for using Twine (<http://www.twinery.org/>), a development platform for making electronic fiction and videogames. Twine is an ideal platform for Digital Humanities education because it is relatively easy to use, but rewards students who are willing to learn transferable skills such as coding in HTML and CSS and basic computer programming. It provides ideal motivation, as well, since students' games will only look good have interesting mechanics if they're willing to put in the time to learn programming. Further, designing games in Twine necessitates a conversation about the relationship between accessible technologies and social justice. This is because Twine has been embraced by communities such as LGBTQ authors as a free, user-friendly, DIY platform for telling their stories in their own way.

**Lesson Plan:** An ideal introduction to Twine begins with a reading from Anna Anthropy's *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters* (2012), a critical work that argues for Twine as a platform for social justice. Students are assigned to read/play Zoe Quinn's *Depression Quest* (the Twine game at the center of the #GamerGate controversy) and Porpentine's *Howling Dogs*. Students are then introduced to the hands-on basics of Twine, following the instructions and video for "Lesson 1: Passages and Links" on the website (only 5-10 minutes of instruction are necessary). Subsequent sessions can follow Lessons 2–5 on the website (each of which require approx. 15 minutes of instruction). A sample syllabus showing a unit on Twine is available at <http://www.adamhammond.com/engl563spring2016/>

**Example:** Riley Wilson's *Driving Alone at Night* was produced in the unit of Twine in ENGL 563. It is available at <http://riley-wilson.com/driving/alone.html>

**Reflection:** Teaching Twine is a delight. I have taught many technical subjects in the context of English classes (XML, TEI, programming in R and Python) and nothing has ever been as successful as Twine. The reason for this is quite straightforward: Twine is first and foremost about stories and narratives first, employing coding as a means to this end, so English students readily buy in; Twine is easy to use but not too easy to use, incentivizing the acquisition of important coding skills by making them necessary to telling a compelling story, something English students care about; most students have played Twine games before entering the class (often without realizing they were made in Twine) and, if they haven't, can quickly see the social relevance of Twine through by playing games like *Depression Quest* and reading critical essays like *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters*.

**NEH Reflection:** Being part of the diverse SD-DH group — with participants from a variety of institutions, from research-heavy universities to community colleges — has reinforced the need to teach coding skills in accessible, student-



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centered ways. It has helped me to focus on Twine as an ideal platform for teaching coding to English undergraduates.