

# How to Use GitHub: A Beginning Workflow

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## 1 The Challenge

You would like to contribute to a software (or any project) that’s managed on GitHub.

## 2 Setting Up

1. Create an account at [GitHub.com](https://github.com).
2. Download the [desktop](#) client for GitHub.
3. Do you have access to the project repository you want to work on? If you’re working on a software package of mine, let me know your username and I can grant you access.
4. Once you have access to the project repository, open the desktop client and “clone” the repository to your machine.

Now you are ready to contribute new code or content.

## 3 Making Contributions

To make a contribution, you can edit the cloned files that are on your machine as you normally would. For example, if you need to edit a `.R` file, you can do so in R or RStudio. If you need to edit a `.tex` file, you can do so in Texpad or your  $\text{\TeX}$  editor of choice.

A key difference from, say, a shared Dropbox folder, is that in GitHub your changes aren’t sent back to the cloud until you explicitly “commit” them.

1. Now you are ready to contribute. Start by walking through GitHub’s [Workflow Guide](#).
2. Follow GitHub’s workflow, with your branch coming off of the `devel` branch. If there is no `devel` branch, create your branch off of the `master` branch.
3. Make changes to your new branch, commit and sync them, and issue a pull request.

Hope this helps!

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