

IDLance Agentic Coding Workshop

With Kortney Ross

A beginner-friendly guide to planning and building a website or learning asset with an AI assistant (Claude, ChatGPT, or similar), Cursor, Git, GitHub, and Vercel

The Tools

Tool	What it's for in this workshop
AI Assistant (Claude, ChatGPT, etc.)	Your thinking partner. Describe your idea in plain English; it helps you turn that into a clear plan and into a ready-to-paste prompt for Cursor. Any LLM you already use works fine.
Cursor	A code editor with AI built in. You describe what you want in chat, and it writes/edits the actual website files for you. Cursor is an Integrated Development Environment (IDE), which is a software application that combines all the basic tools a programmer needs to write, test, and run code in one place.
Git	A tool that tracks changes to your project over time, like unlimited “save points.” Important for version control.
GitHub	A cloud home for your Git project. Vercel connects to it to know what to publish.
Vercel	A hosting service. Connect it to your GitHub project and it automatically builds and publishes your site to a live URL.
Supabase (later)	A database and backend service, which is useful if you want a dynamic project list, a contact form, or user accounts.

The Workflow at a Glance

1. Plan with an AI assistant — describe your site, get a structure/UI-UX plan, and a ready-to-paste Cursor prompt.
2. Set up your accounts and tools — GitHub, Cursor, Vercel.
3. Build with Cursor — turn the plan into a real website, app, or learning asset, one prompt at a time.
4. Push to GitHub — save your project to the cloud.
5. Deploy on Vercel — get a live, shareable link.
6. Iterate — keep prompting Cursor (and your AI assistant) to add pages and content over time.

Set Up Your Tools

1a. Create a GitHub account

- Go to github.com and sign up with your email.
- Choose a username you're comfortable using publicly — it may appear in your site's URL.
- Choose “Create repository” on the left panel. Give your repository a name and choose “Private.”

1b. Download and open Cursor

- Go to cursor.com and download the app for your operating system.
- Create an account using “Sign in with GitHub.”
- When prompted, connect to GitHub and connect all repositories or just the repository you created in step 1a.
- Open the desktop app. It looks and works like other code editors, with an AI chat panel built in.
- Sign in to Cursor when prompted (use your GitHub account).

1c. Create a Vercel account

- Go to vercel.com and sign up using “Continue with GitHub.”
- Choose the “Hobby” plan, which is free!
- Under “Import Git Repository,” choose GitHub and install on all repositories.

More About Cursor

Cursor Desktop app vs. Cloud (Background) Agents

- **Desktop app** — runs on your computer; files live locally and you can preview changes instantly in a browser tab. Easiest to follow along with and troubleshoot so this is what we'll use today.
- **Cloud/Background Agents** — run remotely and can work on tasks in the background, even multiple at once. Powerful for bigger projects or even working on mobile! But cloud agents are only available on paid Cursor plans and adds setup (repo access, no local preview) that we don't have time for today. To set up a cloud agent: Try asking Cursor to help you!

Cursor's Modes

- **Ask mode** — read-only. Cursor answers questions and explains code but doesn't edit anything. Good for understanding what's going on.
- **Plan mode** — Cursor drafts a multi-step plan before touching any files, so you can review and adjust before it makes changes. Most useful once a project already exists and you're making a bigger change.
- **Agent (Build) mode** — Cursor writes and edits files directly to get something built. This is what we'll use today, since we already planned in Step 1.

Make a Plan with an AI Assistant

Before writing any code, describe your site to an AI assistant (Claude, ChatGPT, or whatever you use) in plain language. We'll use two prompts: one to plan the site and its look-and-feel, and one to turn that plan into a single, ready-to-paste prompt for Cursor.

WHY PLAN OUTSIDE CURSOR FIRST?

Cursor's Plan mode shines once you already have a codebase to plan changes against. Since we're starting from a blank slate, planning brand, style, and structure in a separate chat (Step 2) is faster. This will also use less of your Cursor tokens! Then, Agent mode builds it in one shot. Once your project exists, try Plan mode for future changes.

Prompt 1: Plan your site structure & UI/UX

Before you send this, fill in your name/brand, what the site is for, and what you want to showcase. Work with your LLM assistant until you're relatively happy with what it is describing.

TRY THIS PROMPT

I'm building a personal portfolio website. I'm a [your role/field], and the site needs to show off my [projects / case studies / training materials].

My name or brand name is [name/brand], and my tagline is [one short line about what you do].

Help me plan:

- 1) the pages/sections I need and how they should be organized/navigated,
- 2) a UI/UX style direction — overall mood, layout style, and a simple color palette (2–4 colors) that fits my brand, and
- 3) a short list of “must-have” elements for the home page specifically.

Prompt 2: Turn your plan into one Cursor prompt

Now ask the same assistant to combine everything above into a single detailed prompt you can paste directly into Cursor. This saves you from juggling multiple prompts later. Read through the

output and make sure it seems accurate. You can always copy into a note/doc and edit before you add to Cursor.

TRY THIS PROMPT

Based on the plan above, write ONE single, detailed prompt I can paste directly into Cursor to build my homepage. I'm on a free/limited-credit plan, so the prompt should explicitly ask Cursor to keep the implementation lightweight and avoid anything that requires complex JS or multiple revision cycles. Specifically, the prompt should ask Cursor to:

- Create a simple portfolio homepage using plain HTML, CSS, and minimal/no JavaScript
- Use my brand name, tagline, and the color palette we chose above
- Include a hero section, a short 'About me,' and a placeholder 'Projects' section
- Follow the UI/UX style direction (mood/layout) we discussed
- Be responsive using CSS only (one breakpoint is fine — no JS-based menus or scroll effects)
- Meet reasonable accessibility basics (contrast, alt text, semantic HTML) without requiring a full formal audit
- Explicitly instruct Cursor NOT to add scroll animations, hamburger menus, JS toggles, or other interactive logic beyond what's listed above

Build in Cursor

You already did the thinking above. Now you'll hand that off to Cursor to build.

Build it

1. In the Cursor app, start a new chat in Agent (Build) mode (should already be open by default).
2. Paste the single combined prompt your AI assistant wrote for you at the end of Step 2.
3. Answer any follow-up questions Cursor asks.
4. Let Cursor create the files, then open the preview to see your homepage.

If you want to refine

Treat Cursor like a collaborator, not a vending machine. Describe what's wrong or what you'd like changed, rather than starting over.

TRY THIS FOLLOW-UP PROMPT

Make [specific element] look more [adjective], and make sure it looks good on both mobile and desktop and is fully accessible. Keep everything else the same.

Push to GitHub & Deploy on Vercel

4a. Save your project with Git

Option A: Ask the agent to do it (recommended)

Cursor's agent has terminal access, so you can just describe what you want in plain language and let it run the commands for it. It may ask you to confirm each step — that's normal.

TRY THIS PROMPT

Initialize a git repository in this project if one doesn't already exist, add all the files, and commit them with the message "First version of homepage." Then create a new public GitHub repository called [my-portfolio-site] and push this project to it. Walk me through anything you need me to do manually, like signing in.

Option B: Do it yourself in the terminal

1. On github.com, click "New repository," name it, leave it public, and don't add a README. Click "Create repository" — GitHub will show you a URL for it.
2. In Cursor, open a terminal (Terminal menu → New Terminal, or Ctrl+` / Cmd+`).
3. Run these commands one at a time, replacing the URL with the one GitHub gave you:

RUN IN THE TERMINAL

```
git init
git add .
git commit -m "First version of homepage"
git branch -M main
git remote add origin https://github.com/your-username/your-repo.git
git push -u origin main
```

HEADS UP

Cursor recently added its own built-in code hosting (called Origin) alongside GitHub support. The steps above work regardless of which version of Cursor you have, and Vercel deploys from a GitHub repository either way.

4b. Deploy on Vercel

- Go to vercel.com and click “Add New → Project.”
- Select the GitHub repository you just created.
- Leave the default settings and click “Deploy.”
- In about a minute, Vercel gives you a live URL — that's your site, published to the internet.

EVERY FUTURE PUSH AUTO-DEPLOYS

Once connected, any change you push to GitHub automatically updates your live Vercel site within a minute or two.

Level Up Later (Optional Homework)

These are natural next steps once the basics are working.

Displaying Portfolio Pieces or Other Files

The simplest path with the least setup is to store your files in Google Drive or another storage system and either embed or link to them. No database needed.

For Google Docs, Slides, or PDFs

1. Open the file in Google Drive and click Share → set it to “Anyone with the link can view.”
2. For Docs/Slides, use File → Share → “Publish to web” (Slides/Docs) to get an embeddable link, or File → Embed item.
3. Ask Cursor to add an `<iframe>` pointing at that link on your projects page.

TRY THIS PROMPT

Add a card in the projects section titled '[Course name]' with a short description and a button labeled 'View Materials' that links to [your share link] in a new tab.

Or:

Add new page to my site that embeds this Google Slides presentation using an `iframe`: [paste your embed URL here]. Add a page title and descriptive text below it and make sure

it resizes responsively. Then, on the homepage, add a card in the project section that links to this new page.

Other stretch goals

- Add a custom domain in Vercel's project settings

Prompt Cheat Sheet

- Keep these patterns handy for after the workshop:
- Planning: “Help me plan [X]. What sections/steps do I need, in what order?”
- Building: “Create/update [specific element] so that [specific outcome]. Keep [thing to preserve] the same.”
- Fixing: “This isn't working as expected: [describe exactly what you see]. Here's what I expected instead: [X].”
- Styling: “Make [element] look more [adjective], while keeping the layout/structure the same.”
- Explaining: “Explain what this code/section does, in plain English, like I'm new to this.”

Troubleshooting & FAQ

Cursor isn't doing what I asked

Be more specific and give it one change at a time. Point at exact text, colors, or sections rather than saying “make it better.”

My Vercel deploy failed

Check the deployment log on Vercel for a red error line, then paste that exact error into Cursor's chat and ask it to fix it.

I don't see my changes on the live site

Confirm you committed AND pushed in Cursor's Source Control panel. Vercel only deploys what's on GitHub.

Have fun, and don't be afraid to break things. That's what version control is for. 😊