

Hosting Your Dashboard on Netlify — Step by Step

Netlify is a free hosting service that turns a folder containing `index.html` into a live public website with a shareable link. The free tier is more than enough for a dashboard like this. (Heads up on wording: Netlify calls each site a **"project"** — so its menus say "project" where you might expect "site.")

Final check before you publish: the site is about to be public. Confirm one last time that everything behind it is aggregate data — no student-level records, no personally identifiable information, small counts suppressed.

There are two ways to publish. Both end at the same place.

	Method A: Drag and drop	Method B: GitHub
Best for	Publishing once, simplest possible	Ongoing updates over time
Requires	A Netlify account	Netlify + GitHub accounts
Updating later	Drag the folder again	Automatic when you push changes

Method A — Drag and drop (simplest)

1. Sign up free at netlify.com.
2. Get your dashboard ready as a **folder that contains `index.html`**.
3. Built with Claude on the web? Make a new folder (e.g. `crestwater-dashboard`) and put your downloaded `index.html` inside it.
4. Built in VS Code? Use the site folder Claude created — it already has `index.html` inside.
5. In Netlify, choose **Add new project → Deploy manually**. (Shortcut: going to `app.netlify.com/drop` takes you straight to the drop area.)
6. **Drag the whole folder** from your computer onto the drop zone.
7. In a few seconds your site is live at a random address like `resonant-otter-123abc.netlify.app`.
8. Give it a sensible name: **Project configuration → Manage project name** → something like `mesavista-var` → your link becomes `mesavista-var.netlify.app`.
9. **To update later:** open your project in Netlify, go to the **Deploys** tab, and drag the updated folder onto the page. The link stays the same.

Method B — GitHub (best for ongoing updates)

GitHub stores your dashboard files online; Netlify watches them and republishes automatically whenever they change.

1. Sign up free at github.com and at netlify.com.
2. Get your dashboard folder into a GitHub repository. Two easy ways:

3. **In the browser:** on github.com choose **New repository**, name it, create it, then use the **"uploading an existing file"** link and drag your dashboard files in.
4. **From VS Code:** if you built with Claude in VS Code, just ask Claude: *"Publish this project to a new GitHub repository."* It will walk you through it.
5. In Netlify, choose **Add new project → Import an existing project → GitHub**, and authorize Netlify to see your repositories.
6. Pick your dashboard repository.
7. Build settings — keep it simple:
8. **Build command:** leave blank.
9. **Publish directory:** the folder that contains `index.html` (if `index.html` is at the top of the repository, leave this as the default).
10. Click **Deploy**. Your site goes live at a random address; rename it under **Project configuration → Manage project name**.
11. **To update later:** change the files in GitHub (or have Claude push an update from VS Code). Netlify notices and republishes on its own — usually within a minute.

Good to know

- **It's really free** for this use — no credit card needed at signup.
- **Treat the link as fully public.** Anyone with the URL can view it, and search engines can index it. That's fine — as long as everything behind it is aggregate data with small counts suppressed.
- **Custom domains** (like `dashboard.yourcollege.edu`) are possible later; that's a conversation with your IT department, and Netlify supports it.
- **Something looks broken on the live site but fine locally?** Most often the folder was missing `index.html` at its top level, or a file was renamed. Re-check the folder contents and drag it in again.