

## Top 10 Ways of Recruiting High School Women into Your Computing Classes



How do young people choose careers? The factors that affect their choices include: interest, confidence that they can succeed in this career, feeling like they belong with others in this occupation, and identifying themselves as this "type of person", e.g., a "computing person." Recruiting, therefore, requires that you promote students' interest and confidence, create an inclusive community, and help students form an identity as a computing person.

- 1** Reach out to able female students through collaborative projects with student government, yearbook, newspaper, honor society, sports teams, etc. Try to recruit friendship groups, so that female students will not feel isolated in your classes.
- 2** Have current or past female students visit other classes to briefly show and tell how computing relates to interests like health, fashion, forensics, etc. [see [dotdiva.org](http://dotdiva.org) for materials] and how studying computer science helps them achieve their goals, e.g., college admission.
- 3** Give students specific information about computing careers that accomplish tasks they consider important. For example, computer scientists create clothing that aids blind people in navigating their environment; they write software for cochlear implants that let deaf people hear; they create secure databases for recording human rights abuses while shielding victim and witness identities; they create tools that help ordinary people collect extraordinary amounts of money for important causes.
- 4** Describe the characteristics of computing occupations. For example, emphasize that computing jobs are flexible because they let you work in any industry in any part of the country, that they require working with others such as team members and clients, that women in computing occupations are on average more satisfied with their jobs than women in other occupations, and that job openings will be plentiful and salaries high.
- 5** Inform academic advisors, other teachers, and parents about the opportunities in computing and why it is important for female students to study computer science. Request that they especially encourage girls to take your class.
- 6** Realize that confidence is not the same as ability. Because of stereotypes about women and computing, female students may benefit from personal encouragement and assurance they will do well in your class. Explain what makes you sure of that assessment.
- 7** Build students' confidence in their ability to succeed in computing by providing sample tasks that have enough challenge to be interesting but doable, especially through group efforts. Logic puzzles can serve this purpose. Use pedagogy that scaffolds learning.
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- 9 Call attention to your class and your students whenever the opportunity presents itself — elective fairs, posters, videos, announcements, etc.
- 10 Be conscious that your audience includes students who do not necessarily want to think of themselves as nerds or geeks. Be inclusive in your language and the images you use. For example, use a gender mix or gender indeterminate names in your assignments; and decorate your classroom with images of women leaders in computing, group pictures of students (if female students are in the pictures), or artifacts from past projects.

### Additional Resources

How Can Encouragement Increase Persistence in Computing? Encouragement Works in Academic Settings ([www.ncwit.org/academicencouragement](http://www.ncwit.org/academicencouragement))

What Are the Important Components of Targeted Recruiting? Change the Gender Composition of High School Computing Courses ([www.ncwit.org/highschoolrecruit](http://www.ncwit.org/highschoolrecruit))

Why Should Young Women Consider a Career in Information Technology? ([www.ncwit.org/youngwomen](http://www.ncwit.org/youngwomen))

Girls in IT: The Facts ([www.ncwit.org/thefactsgirls](http://www.ncwit.org/thefactsgirls))