# Tips for Classroom **Volunteers**

CSTeachingTips.org/Tips-for-Classroom-Volunteers

**1** **Share a non-computing hobby**
to show engineers have non-stereotypical interests.

> For fun I like to watch movies!

**2** **Focus on the positive**
to avoid discouraging students.

> My favorite part of my job is…

**3** **Re-introduce yourself to students**
to minimize the imbalance in power.

> Hi, I'm … What's your name? … Did I pronounce it correctly?

**4** **Move to students' eye-level**
to connect with students as equals.

> Can you talk me through what your code does?

**5** **Stay quiet during announcements**
to model respect for the teacher.

> Let's pause to hear what your teacher says!

**6** **Defer to the teacher**
to be consistent with classroom norms.

> How would you like me to respond if students are off-task?

**7** **Explain what counts as CS**
to help students realize that they are learning CS.

> I had to solve a similar problem last week!

## csteachingtips

### 1 Share a non-computing hobby

Students might assume that all computer scientists want to program 24-hours a day and have only stereotypical hobbies. Even if you fit these stereotypes, the field doesn't require these things. Make sure students see that you have other interests to help them understand that regardless of their interests they can become computer scientists.

### 2 Focus on the positive

Sometimes the path to becoming a computer scientist is tough. For you it might have involved facing discrimination and a lot of hard work! Make sure to focus on the reasons that you stuck with CS rather than sharing the challenges you overcame. Any stories that make you seem super-human can make success in CS seem unattainable. For young students there is no need to describe challenges you've faced.

### 3 Re-introduce yourself to students

Ask the classroom teacher to introduce you and what you'll be doing in the class. When you work with students individually re-introduce yourself. This provides the opportunity to ask for the student's name and show interest in them as a person by making sure that you're pronouncing their name correctly. Don't hesitate to ask them to say their name again or ask how their name is spelled. But don't describe their name as unusual or difficult to say!

### 4 Move to students' eye-level

As an adult visitor to their class, students will likely find you intimidating. If you stand while you help students, you might unintentionally tower over them and reinforce that intimidation. Instead get at students' eye-level or lower. Doing this can be physically taxing. Consider asking the teacher if there is a stool or chair you can move throughout the class.

### 5 Stay quiet during announcements

It is likely that the teacher will need to make announcements during the class. When this happens, do not quietly continue your conversation with students. It is natural to want to finish your conversation with the students, but stop talking so that you and all of the students can listen to the teacher. Make sure to stop talking even if not all of the students stop talking to listen.

### 6 Defer to the teacher

It is likely that students will need to be redirected if they get off-task. Don't assume kids who get off-task are bad kids or not interested in CS. Check with the teacher before class to ask how they would like you to interact with students who are off-task. They might suggest that you introduce yourself and ask "What are you working on?"

### 7 Explain what counts as CS

Students might not realize that what they are doing counts as programming. This might be particularly true if the programming environment looks like a game. Explain how what they're doing relates to professional programming so that the activity can build their confidence in their ability to do CS.