

TeachingEnglish lesson

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# Women and girls in science

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**Lead-in: Discuss these questions.**

- Some people believe that you are either an 'Arts' person or a 'Science' person. Which subjects would you associate with those categories?
- Is this statement true for you?
- Why do you think people have this idea?

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**Task 1: Read the first paragraph of an article. Why did the UN declare 11 February as International Day of Women and Girls in Science?**

## **International Day of Women and Girls in Science**

In 2016, the UN declared 11 February as International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The main reason for this declaration was to encourage more girls and women to take up jobs in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (also known as the STEM subjects). Figures show that although there is no significant difference in ability between boys and girls in maths and science, less than 35 per cent of graduates in STEM subjects worldwide are women and there are even fewer in engineering and information technology.

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Task 2: Match the vocabulary (1-8) with the definitions (a-h).

1. to discourage	a. to think that something is not as good as it actually is
2. to dominate	b. a group that is smaller than a larger group it is part of
3. gender	c. to be stronger or bigger in number
4. a mentor	d. treating people differently because of, for example, their age, sex or race
5. a minority	e. to make someone not want to do something
6. a researcher	f. the social condition of being male or female
7. to underestimate	g. someone who studies a subject carefully to discover new information
8. discrimination	h. a person who advises and supports someone with less experience

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**Task 3: Read more paragraphs from the article. Answer the questions.**

## **1. Why is it important to involve more women and girls in science?**

When one group of people dominates a field of study, whether it's an age group, a cultural group or a gender, there is danger of creating a narrow view of the subject. Including more women in male-dominated areas will bring in fresh points of view, new talent and creativity. It can also help increase women's social and financial position in some countries.

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**Task 3: Read more paragraphs from the article. Answer the questions.**

**2. Why aren't more girls taking up careers in STEM subjects?** This is a difficult and complicated question. A number of answers have been suggested.

## **Early years**

Some suggest that girls have less experience of activities and toys that encourage an interest in science. Others suggest that girls are more critical of their abilities and tend to underestimate themselves, so they might not think they're 'good enough' to study a STEM subject at university.

## **Making choices at school**

Studies found that girls' test results in science subjects were as good as boys'. But since they often also do well in other subjects, girls have more choices when deciding what to study. This has an obvious influence on their future choice in jobs.

## **Entering the world of work**

Another factor could be the fact that the thought of being one of a small minority on a university course, or in a job, may discourage girls from preparing for a career in research or engineering. There is a common fear that if you are in a minority, you will suffer discrimination and you will need to work much harder in order to succeed.

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**Task 4: Read the rest of the article and answer the question.**

**What can be done to encourage girls to take up science as a career?**

There are a number of things that can be done to encourage girls to consider a career in science.

## **Early years**

Parents and schools can introduce all children – boys and girls – to activities and toys that encourage them to build and make things and get them interested in exploring the world around them and how it works.

## **Making choices at school**

A number of organisations send women scientists to talk to girls at school about their work. Some schools encourage older girls who are studying STEM subjects to talk to younger students in their schools about their passion for their subject. University and research facilities open their laboratories to schools so that the students can experience hands-on scientific research.

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**Task 4: Read the rest of the article and answer the question.**

## **Entering the world of work**

More and more workplaces and science departments are using mentor programmes to help and support women when they are working in a minority. Women in senior roles are often very keen to offer support to younger women entering their field.

## **Role models**

Probably one of the most important things is to make sure that girls see plenty of examples of successful women scientists in the news and in the media.

## **Sources**

<http://www.un.org/en/events/women-and-girls-in-science-day/>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/international-day-of-women-and-girls-in-science>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/02/the-more-gender-equality-the-fewerwomen-in-stem/553592/>



# Women and girls in science

**Task 5: You are going to watch a video to encourage women and girls to study and work in science. Read the list. Which of these things would you expect to see in the video? Make notes.**

- a. a microscope
- b. high heeled shoes
- c. a man in a white coat
- d. a lipstick
- e. experiments
- f. women laughing
- g. sunglasses
- h. safety goggles
- i. science textbooks
- j. pictures of famous scientists
- k. a laboratory
- l. someone blowing a kiss
- m. statistics about women in science

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**Task 5: Discuss these questions about the video.**

- What is your opinion of the video?
- How effective do you think it might be in encouraging girls and women to take up science? Why?
- What is the slogan? How effective is it?

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Thanks for attending the lesson