

Tips for Reducing Bias



CSTeachingTips.org/Tips-for-Reducing-Bias

1 Make your expectations explicit
to avoid tacit assumptions within your class.

Start homework early so you have time to get help!

2 Grade anonymously
to mitigate the effect of unconscious bias.

Don't put your name in the homework!

3 Establish clear policies
to ensure students are held to the same standards.

All students receive a two-day extension.

4 Learn students' names
to enable you to engage all students equally.

That's a great question ____!

5 Acknowledge & manage your bias
to mitigate and monitor the impact of your biases.

Am I spending more time with particular students?

6 Teach students about bias
to educate your students and show you care.

Everyone has unconscious, unintentional biases!

7 Listen to students' experiences
to learn how you can create a supportive environment.

What in your classes makes you feel like you belong?

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1

Make your expectations explicit

We often have tacit assumptions about what students should do to be successful in our classes: take notes during lecture, ask questions, get started on the homework early, come to office hours, and read the book. These things might be different in each of their classes and some students might be better prepared to guess what the right things are. Help remove the guesswork for students by making these expectations of their behavior explicit.

2

Grade anonymously

Research shows that people evaluate the same resume more favorably if it has a man's name than a woman's name. We are surrounded by stereotypes and research studies show that these unconscious biases can shape our evaluations of others. If possible, remove information about the identity of the student when evaluating their work. I have students write their names on the back page of the exam. I could look at their name, but I don't.

3

Establish clear policies

When students ask for exceptions for extenuating circumstances we have to make subjective decisions regarding their situation. Write down your plans for these situations to ensure all students are held to the same policies. When new circumstances arise add them to your plans because having them written down will help you improve your consistency.

4

Learn students' names

Knowing a student's name allows you to better connect with them. However, it is normal to learn some students' names more quickly than others. Make an effort to learn students' names to avoid unequal connections to your students. It can be helpful to video students saying their names so that you can practice the correct pronunciation. Checking that you are pronouncing their name correctly is an important way to show you value them as a person.

5

Acknowledge and manage your biases

We often conflate implicit bias with explicit sexism, racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, or transphobia. While we certainly wouldn't identify ourselves as sexist, we have to recognize that some of our actions may be unconsciously based upon our biased assumptions about the abilities, interests, or needs of girls or women. It is important to become reflective about your behavior to identify ways in which your expectations of, or interactions with, people might conform to stereotypes you unconsciously hold about one of their identities. Consider adopting a system where you randomize the order in which you call on students.

6

Teach students about bias

Help educate students about implicit bias. For example, when you introduce your plans for anonymous grading you can explain the underlying research about implicit bias. Introducing implicit bias research also communicates to students your goal to treat all students fairly.

7

Listen to students' experiences

Learn from students' stories about their interactions with their instructors and peers. When you realize you have contributed to a student's negative experience: apologize, identify what you'll do differently next time, and don't try to justify your behavior.