

WOMEN INTO
TECH

INTRODUCING CONNECT-UPS



MAKING CONNECT-UPS A SUCCESS

This document is designed to help run Connect-Ups as part of the Women into Tech project.

The document has the following sections:

- Guidelines for making your Connect-Up a success
- Introductions: Connect-Up 1 Facilitator Notes
- Inclusive by Design: Connect-Up 2 Facilitator Notes
- Making a Difference: Connect-Up 3 Facilitator Notes

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ABOUT CONNECT-UPS

Connect-Ups are opportunities for women in tech (studying, working, apprentices) to get together (online just now) to chat and support each other. The Connect-Ups are part of Women into Tech, a project by Edinburgh Napier University and University of Stirling, funded by Skills Development Scotland.

<https://blogs.napier.ac.uk/womenintotech/connect-ups-2/>

CONNECT-UP OUTLINES

We've created 3 outlines to get the Connect-Ups started. These provide themes, structure, and resources to support conversations. They are based on our research into encouraging women's tech careers.

CASE STUDIES

Our research told us that there are many, diverse roles in digital and many routes in, so we've reached out to our friends, asking them about their jobs, their studies, and their journeys into tech. The result is a collection of short case study profiles. These are fascinating in themselves, but also a great resource and a useful focus for chatting about the challenges we face as women in tech: <https://blogs.napier.ac.uk/womenintotech/case-studies/>

CONNECT-UPS - GUIDELINES

“Space to make connections in the tech sector”

GUIDELINES



BEFORE THE EVENT

SCHEDULING, PLATFORMS, REGISTRATION

The Women in Tech project team will schedule the first meet-ups and choose the most appropriate platform. We'll also set up registration, so that we can collect additional information for our evaluation. When women register, we'll send out the meeting link and a calendar invite.

If you continue to meet, you can discuss the best times and days between you and also agree the most convenient ways to meet and securely share invites to meetings.

SENDING LINKS, REMINDERS, AND INFORMATION



It's a good idea to send out some basic information in advance, so people know what to expect, e.g. the theme and format and whether there will be a break. We'll also send reminders directly, including the meeting link, to everyone who is registered.

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HOSTING AND FACILITATION

ROLES

It's useful to have two people:

- a host/facilitator who welcomes everyone, keeps the Connect-Up moving along its theme and facilitates discussions so that everyone who wants to can join in, also
- a co-host who can look after the chat and let participants join the meeting if there's a lobby system.

TECH



If you're giving a presentation, or just sharing files, it's a good idea to test it before the meeting. If you have a guest speaker, ask them to arrive ten minutes in advance and check screen sharing etc.

It's best to keep audio and video separate from any slides, as these don't always play directly from PowerPoint. Also check that you have the right settings in your meeting platform (e.g. Zoom, Teams) to play audio content.

Headphones are also important if you're in a shared space to protect each others' privacy.

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WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS

Help to orient your participants as you welcome them, give them an idea of what’s coming up, if there’ll be breakout groups, and/or a break etc. When asking people to introduce themselves, it’s a good idea to ask them to share specific information, such as job role, what they’re studying.

CHECK IN QUESTIONS

A simple check-in question can help people relax and begin to get to know each other. These also work well in the chat. Some suggestions:

Where are you calling in from?

What good thing happened to you this week?

What’s the weather like where you are just now?



Word of warning: if you ask people to share what has brought them to the Connect-Up (or a similar, interesting question) you may get some rather long replies (see rambling below). See our guidelines for facilitating online Connect-Ups.

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SOME FURTHER ADVICE.....

RESPECT AND PRIVACY

It's a good idea to remind participants to treat each other kindly and with respect not only during the Connect-up, but afterwards. This means respecting each other's privacy and not sharing personal information (such as difficult experiences at work) beyond the meeting. It's important to specify this at the beginning in order to create a safe space.

RAMBLING OR SILENCE

All of your participants are likely to have something useful to contribute, but some are likely to be more confident about sharing. Breakout groups help to provide space for more shy people to talk, whereas it is a difficult part of the host facilitator's role to discourage rambling and keep the discussion flowing. One way is to pre-empt this by asking attendees to be brief or share one thing or two things, etc. It's a challenge!

ENGAGEMENT



Smaller groups are often a better way to encourage people to chat. So, if there's more than six of you, use breakout groups, ideally of 4 or 5 people. Make sure each group has clear instructions as to what they're talking about and if any outputs or reporting back is expected. It's also a good idea for either the host or co-host to remain in the main room, in case people arrive late or get shut out.

You can also encourage people to add comments in the chat.

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FINALLY.....



WRAP

Planning the next meeting:

- invite two other people to host the next meeting;
- make sure everyone knows what the plan is for the next meeting and who is sending links, calendar invites etc.

You may want to decide how to stay in touch, between meetings - for example sharing email addresses or social media IDs in the chat.

Invite. Feedback. [Add resources for feedback, e.g. padlet]

Thank everyone for coming along.

LINKS AND RESOURCES



- See Equate Scotland’s guidelines for running webinars/online events (pdf).
- Elevate your event – a toolkit for digital events from Creative Informatics <https://creativeinformatics.org/news/elevate-your-event-a-toolkit-for-digital-events/>
- This is for Zoom, but most of the advice would work well for Teams or another platform: <https://medium.com/unityeffect/how-to-facilitate-engaging-online-meetings-with-zoom-3cc94c1cab89>

CONNECT-UP 1

“There’s always something new going on that you have to try and develop more and work with your team” (Laura Anderson)

INTRODUCTION



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome participants as they arrive. As people are arriving, invite them to answer a check-in question in the chat, such as *What good thing happened to you this week?* or *Where are you just now and what’s the weather like there?*

When you’re ready introduce yourself and your co-host and give a brief overview of this Connect-Up, e.g. *This Connect-Up is a chance to meet other women and chat about studying and working in tech.*

It’s a good idea to include a safe space statement, like: *Can I also remind you to be kind, respect each other’s privacy and not share personal stories beyond the group?*

Invite the participants one by one to introduce themselves, including their name, their job role and/or what course they’re studying.



Before the first breakout group, you (the facilitator and co-host) could briefly recount your journeys into tech and what you enjoy about it. And/ or introduce one of the case studies and say why you chose that one.

CONNECT-UP 1

INTRODUCTION



DISCUSSION 1: WORKING IN TECH

If you have more than six participants, use breakout groups for these discussions.

Give the groups about 10 minutes to talk about these questions - maybe visit the groups and put the questions in the chat.

- What do you love about tech – studying it, working with it or just playing with it at home?
- What or who inspired you to consider a career in technology – something or someone?
- Does your role or your studies give you opportunities to be creative? If not, do you miss this?

Get someone from the group to report back to the main group.

For the full infographic (right), see <https://wearetechwomen.com/wearetechwomen-barriers-for-women-in-tech-infographic-2022/>

WOMEN INTO TECH



CONNECT-UP 1



DISCUSSION 2: WORKING IN TEAMS

You can use the same breakout groups or different ones (e.g. if using a random group allocator).

Again, give the groups about 10 minutes to talk about this and put the questions in the chat.

- Do you work on your own or in a team? Do you prefer to work on your own or in a team? (Students can talk about their experiences of working in groups)
- What is the gender balance like in your workplace or on your course? How do you feel about that?
- If you've identified challenges, what tips do you have for overcoming them (e.g. for being comfortable in your work).

Get someone from the group to report back to the main group.



WRAP

- Ask the group for 2 volunteers to facilitate the next session. Share the next topic and invite suggestions for alternative topics. The three Connect-Up topics are just suggestions – find common interests!
- Invite people to put contact details (e.g. email address, social media info) in the chat if they would like to stay in touch.
- [Add resources for feedback, e.g. padlet]
- Then thank everyone for coming along.
- Make sure everyone knows when the next Connect-Up is.

Next Connect-Up is....share the date/ agree a date

CONNECT-UP 2

“I’d love a chance to meet up with other women who are in a similar position to me, or even a bit further on....”



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

See our guidelines for facilitating online Connect-Ups.

Welcome participants as they arrive and invite them to answer a check-in question in the chat, such as *Show us your most-used emoji, What is your favourite quick lunch? or How would you describe your job to a six-year-old child?*

When you’re ready, introduce yourself and your co-host: who are you, where do you work/study, and what do you enjoy about being in tech?

Next, give a brief overview of this Connect-Up, e.g. *This Connect-Up is a chance to meet other women and chat about studying and working in tech. Today’s focus is how the tech industry supports inclusive design in products, and how it provides a welcoming workspace for all.*

It’s a good idea to include a safe space statement, like: *Can I also remind you to be kind, respect each other’s privacy and not share personal stories beyond the group?*



You may have different participants from Connect-Up 1, so start with some introductions. Invite the participants one by one to introduce themselves, including their name, their job role and/or what course they’re studying.

CONNECT-UP 2



“I’d love a chance to meet up with other women who are in a similar position to me, or even a bit further on....”

DISCUSSION POINT 1

If you have more than six participants, use breakout groups for these discussions.

There are many ways in which tech can be used to support our lives : consider how difficult the pandemic would have been without online working from home, shopping, banking and so on. It doesn’t always work well for everyone.

For example:

- In 2018 Amazon developed an AI to support recruitment which learned from the existing data that women were under-represented and therefore rejected women’s CVs (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-amazon-com-jobs-automation-insight-idUSKCN1MK08G>).
- In 2021 Twitter confirmed that their algorithm for image-cropping unintentionally favoured women over men and white people over black people (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-57192898>).

Give the groups about 10 minutes to talk about the following questions – it can be useful to visit the groups and put the questions in the chat to remind everyone what the focus is.

- What examples have you encountered of tech bias?
- Why does that matter?
- How might the situation be improved? What can be done to create more inclusive systems?

Get someone from the group to report back to the main group.

CONNECT-UP 2



DISCUSSION POINT 2

One reason tech is designed largely for young white males is that it's designed by young white males. This can also mean that the working environment is more suitable for the more dominant groups.

- What is the worst tech workplace / study place feature you've encountered? [It could be about the décor, the culture, the expectations, the rewards. Don't name the company!]
- Contrast this with the best workplace/study environment. What makes for an inclusive environment for you? More flexibility and family-friendly policies? E.g. part-time or job-sharing arrangements to help with caring responsibilities. Great social events that are not just about beer and pizza?

Get someone from the group to report back to the main group. Encourage everyone to identify one thing they could improve this month.

“I'd love a chance to meet up with other women who are in a similar position to me, or even a bit further on....”

Diversity is better:

How diversity makes us smarter, article by Katherine Phillips
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_diversity_makes_us_smarter

Why diversity is more productive and profitable, McKinsey report
<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

CONNECT-UP 2

“I’d love a chance to meet up with other women who are in a similar position to me, or even a bit further on.....”



WRAP UP

Facilitator – remind the group that women have asked to meet up with other women – and ask if this format is working.

- Ask the group for 2 volunteers to facilitate the next session.
- Invite people to put contact details (e.g. email address, social media info) in the chat if they would like to stay in touch.
- [Add resources for feedback, e.g. padlet]
- Thank everyone for coming along.
- Make sure everyone knows when the next Connect-Up is.

Next Connect-Up is.....share the date/ agree a date

CONNECT-UP 3

"You're building things that have never been built before" (Monica Richardson)

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



INTRODUCTIONS

Facilitator, please introduce where you work and/or where you study. What is it like? Could you share the best aspects of your role/ course?

Please take some time to run through introductions and make everyone feel welcome.

DISCUSSION POINT 1

Can tech save the planet, or is it part of the problem? Tech for good, or bad?

- we can design accessibility into tech products from voice recognition to healthcare robotics
- image processing technology is being used to improve plant growth in Africa
- apps help address waste (the average family throws away 22% of their food shop each week e.g. Olio).



BUT

- researchers think ICT will cause 14% of all emissions by 2030 ?
- Amnesty International have evidence that cobalt for mobile phone manufacturing is mined by children as young as 7

Facilitator – please discuss any examples from your experience (or that you think look interesting in the Additional Information section) and seek views from the group.
Ask whether a desire to harness tech for good motivated participants to go into tech.

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CONNECT-UP 3

"You're building things that have never been built before" (Monica Richardson)



DISCUSSION POINT 2

Women are more likely than men to pick a career that matches their values.

Ask participants to think about what they value, and if they agree with the statement?

Are there any aspects of tech they are less comfortable with?



WRAP UP

Facilitator, please ask the group if they would like to meet up again.

If so, ask for two volunteers to co-host the next session, and invite topics for discussion.

Please chat through what worked and what could be better.

[Add resources for feedback, e.g. padlet]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Check out Edinburgh-based GearedApp's tech for good series with Josh Carson:

<https://gearedapp.co.uk/tech-for-good/>

Find out more about Scotland's Digital for Good network: <https://www.digitalforgood.uk/>

Get active: <https://techforgood.global/>

CONNECT-UPS

“Space to make connections in the tech sector”

THANK YOU FOR
MAKING A DIFFERENCE



THANK YOU!

Many thanks - if you facilitated or co-hosted a Connect-Up.
Get in touch: Sally Smith, s.smith@napier.ac.uk
Stay in touch: <https://blogs.napier.ac.uk/womenintotech/>



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SCOTLAND

Thank you also to our project funders, Skills Development Scotland

Edinburgh Napier
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