

# A Proposed Definition of Computer Literacy

## Submitted to the University Curriculum Committee

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As “Computer Literacy” courses proliferate, it has been suggested that the university develop minimal standards to certify graduates are computer literate. The National Resource Council report “Being Fluent with Information Technology” (<http://newton.nap.edu/html/beingfluent>) forms the basis for this proposed definition of “Computer Literacy.”

1. At present, no single current course meets all aspects listed below
2. People in some disciplines should know supplemental concepts and have additional skills

To be computer literate a person must understand basic concepts and possess certain skills.

**Concepts:** A computer literate person understands

1. What is a computer system and the basics of how it works
2. The general features of an information system
3. What a network is and the basics of how it works
4. How information can be encoded
5. The general concepts of an information organization
6. Methods for computer modeling of real-world phenomena
7. How to think algorithmically
8. The idea of universality of computation
9. How computational complexity and undecidability limits information technology
10. The societal impact of information and information technology

**Skills:** A computer literate person is able to

1. Set up a personal computer
2. Use basic operating system features
3. Use a document preparation system
4. Use a graphics and/or artwork package to create illustrations, slides, or other image-based expressions of ideas
5. Connect a computer to a network
6. Use the Internet to find information and resources
7. Use a computer to communicate with others
8. Use a spreadsheet to model simple processes or financial tables
9. Use a database system to set up and access useful information
10. Use a computer to continue learning