

# THAT'S A (GENDER) STEREOTYPE!



## OVERVIEW

This lesson will explain what a “stereotype” is to elementary students. By playing the “Stereotype Game”, students will get to participate in challenging gender stereotypes, and the many ways that we can fit or break them. They will list some common gender stereotypes for girls and boys, and learn how all children can decide for themselves what they like and what they want to be when they grow up.



## OBJECTIVES

Students will define stereotypes and explore how they relate to gender.  
 Student will list examples of gender stereotypes and discuss their limitations.  
 Students will reflect on their own gender in relation to stereotypes.



## AGE/EXPERIENCE LEVEL

Grades 1-3.



## THINGS TO PREP & TOOLS NEEDED

Look over the questions for the game *That's a Stereotype!*. Fill in the blanks to best represent your students. Materials: chart paper, markers, paper, pencils.



## TIME

40 minutes.

## ALL ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

1. Opening or Pre-work: Have students reflect on their own likes. They will use this later to help them brainstorm what gender stereotypes they fit and which do not fit for them. Students should list their favorite activities, colors, and what they hope to be when they grow up.
2. Whole Group Discussion: Introduce and define “stereotype” by first writing it on the board, and asking students if they’ve heard this word before. If they have, ask for an example. Write the definition on the board: “a simple idea that many people believe about a large group of people that is **not true** for everyone in that group.”
3. As a class or in groups, have students generate examples of stereotypes for girls, boys, and children. Give examples as a whole group as necessary, and include **activities, colors, and professions**. This is a moment when you can include the statement, “Some people aren’t boys or girls, they’re just people.” Including stereotypes for all “children” as well as “boys” and “girls” will

leave space for nonbinary people, and be sure that you're not reinforcing the gender binary. See [GLSEN's Gender Discussion Guide](#) for more information about gender identity.

- Some example stereotypes may be:
    - *Girls – Activities: drawing, dolls, singing, reading Colors: pink, purple, Professions: teacher, nurse, mother/home-maker*
    - *Boys – Activities: trucks, Legos, math Colors: blue, green Professions: doctor, principal, firefighter*
    - *Children - toys, playing, asking questions, recess, art class, friends*
  - Whether students worked in pairs or groups to make the lists, make sure to come back together as a whole group to make a class list of stereotypes. Write these on chart paper so the students can think about them and the ways they fit or break them after the lesson. Ask students, “Are there any stereotypes that you fit?” “Are there any stereotypes that don't fit you?” “Do these stereotypes have to be true for all girls, all boys, or all children?”
4. As a class play the game, “That's a Stereotype!”. Tell students, “I'm going to read a sentence. If the sentence is a **stereotype**, or a simple idea that's not true for everyone in a group, stand up and cross your arms, and say, “That's a stereotype!” If it's not, then stay in your seats.” *Note: If you have students with mobility challenges, instead of standing for the game, students can hold up signs that say “stereotype” when the statement is a stereotype or cross their arms from wherever they are.*

- a) All of you are in \_\_\_\_\_ grade.
- b) Some \_\_\_\_ graders like recess.
- c) Girls like to wear dresses.
- d) Some girls like to draw.
- e) All of the boys like to play with trucks.
- f) Some of the \_\_\_\_ graders are boys.
- g) All of the \_\_\_\_ graders are girls.
- h) Teachers are all girls.
- i) Some of the \_\_\_\_ graders like playing tag.
- j) Nurses are all girls.
- k) Some boys like to play with trucks.
- l) Girls like reading.
- m) All boys like tag.
- n) All children identify as boys or girls.
- o) Girls like dolls.
- p) Some girls like to play with Legos.
- q) All children like to draw.
- r) Some boys like to play with Legos.
- s) Girls like the color purple.
- t) Some children like the color yellow.
- u) Some boys like the color pink.
- v) Some \_\_\_\_ graders like to dance.
- w) Boys like video games.
- x) All of the \_\_\_\_ graders are awesome!

Tell the students, “Stereotypes are a simple idea about a large group of people that many people think is true, but it is **not true** for everyone in that group.”

5. Conclusion: Ask students to look again at the lists of stereotypes for boys and girls. Encourage them to think about how they identify today and to list any ways that they don't fit or “break” stereotypes for girls, boys, or children. Facilitate a conversation with your students about their reflections, asking, “Is it OK when stereotypes don't fit us? How does it feel when stereotypes don't fit? Why should we think about gender stereotypes, or stereotypes telling us about things for ‘boys’ and ‘girls’?”

Remind students, “Gender stereotypes are harmful because they take a simple idea and try to say it works for everyone in a group. Gender stereotypes sometimes make people stop doing an activity they like and really want to do. They make it harder for people to be themselves and to like what they like.”

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIFFERENTIATION

For students who need more time or support with this topic, this lesson can be broken into three lessons by separating out the opening and conclusion, and students can also play the game in smaller groups or work 1:1 with a teacher and use the statements cut out in a “stereotype” or “not a stereotype” sort. To challenge students, instead of a teacher reading the statements for the *Stereotype Game*, the statements can be written onto strips and students can take turns pulling and reading them from a bag. Students can also be challenged to create their own version of the game or to add their own examples for a second round.

## FOLLOW UP/EXTENSIONS

- Find examples characters in picture books who are being teased for breaking gender stereotypes, and have students work together to create and then act out ways to intervene. For example, try Red from Michael Hall’s *Red: A Crayon’s Story* or Dyson from Cheryl Kilodavis’ *My Princess Boy*. How can your students be an ally for people who break gender stereotypes?
- Have students work on their own independent project to combat gender stereotypes: Ask students, “What can you do to make sure people can choose their own likes, whether they fit a gender stereotype or not? Who do you want to tell people about Gender Stereotypes?” For example:
  - Write a letter or make a card showing support for someone you know or a character we’ve read about who broke gender stereotypes.
  - Draw a comic strip that shows someone being an ally to someone who breaks gender stereotypes. What could they say or do to intervene?
  - Write a skit that shows someone being an ally to people who break gender stereotypes.
- Have students examine gender stereotypes in the media and around them in the lesson “Let’s Go Shopping” from GLSEN’s Ready, Set, Respect!

## OTHER LESSONS TO EXPLORE GENDER STEREOTYPES

- K-2 That’s Just For... Ready, Set Respect, GLSEN.
- K-2, 3-5 [What Are Gender Stereotypes](#), Teaching Tolerance.
- 3-5, [Examining Stereotypes in Books](#), Teaching Tolerance.

## TAGS

Gender, Stereotype.

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS ACTIVITY? TELL US HOW IT WENT AND WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER!  
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