

Exploring gender stereotypes with jobs (KS1 / 5-7 year olds)



Classroom activity

Summary:

This activity is aimed at pupils in lower primary, aged 5 to 7 years old. Pupils are asked to think about what jobs they'd like to do when they grow up, what jobs men and women can do and what skills they need for particular jobs. They are introduced to the term 'gender stereotypes' and are asked to think about why some jobs are seen as 'for men' and some jobs are seen as 'for women'.

Learning objectives:

- To understand that whether you are a boy or a girl, you can learn any skill.
- To know that all jobs are open to anyone.
- To begin to understand gender stereotypes in the context of what jobs and activities boys and girls, or men and women, are expected to do.

Duration:

30 minutes

Age group:

Primary KS1:
Key Stage 1 in England and Wales, Foundation Stage in Northern Ireland, Primary 1 and 2 in Scotland

Materials required:

- Images of selected jobs - see slide show
- If you prefer, you could use hats or dress up items you have in your setting or classroom instead of the slide show

Instructions:

Step 1:

- Start by asking pupils to say what jobs they want to do when they grow up. They can either do this in talk partners and then share with the class, or as a whole class activity.
- Write them down for everyone to see.
- Make sure there is no judgment about the jobs pupils choose – you can be anything!

Step 2:

- Choose 5 jobs to focus on (see the below list and accompanying slide show).
Footballer, firefighter, singer, dancer, astronaut, runner / athlete, hairdresser, teacher, musician, artist, scientist, gamer, chef / cook / baker, nurse, doctor.
- First ask the pupils if they know anyone who does the job. Is it someone on TV or who is famous, or someone they know in real life? You can include fictional characters from books or TV.
- Note down who they say. Is there a mix of men and women?

Step 3:

- For each job, ask the class to say what you need to be able to do or to learn to be good at the job. Introduce the word 'skills'. A 'skill' is the ability to do something well because you have practised it a lot, e.g. playing guitar or cooking. What skills do you need for each job?

- Suggestions included below - but wait for pupils to make suggestions first then add your own. Footballer: kick a ball, score a goal, run fast, be fit and strong, being a team player; Nurse: caring, good listening skills, maths for checking medicine dosage, good decision making skills; Astronaut or scientist: good with numbers and remembering complicated information quickly, problem solving, be able to use computers and communicate theories; Dancer: be fit and strong, be creative, be agile, be able to memorise dance moves, be musical; Chef: be able to follow a recipe, be creative, be able to work quickly to a deadline, a good knowledge of food.

Step 4:

- Now ask pupils if the skills and jobs they've listed can only be done by men or only be done by women.
- If they say yes to some of them ask them why? Ask if it's the same for girls and boys? Can girls play football, can boys dance?
- Introduce the phrase 'gender stereotype'. An example of a gender stereotype is saying all boys like football or all girls like pink. Ask the class what sports they like to play and what colours they like. Make sure both girls and boys in the class get the chance to say what they like, and don't like.
- 'Gender stereotype' means limiting what girls and boys can do and be, including what they can do when they grow up. Can they think of any other gender stereotypes? Feel free to tailor this for your Year 1 or Year 2 class as you feel appropriate - you may get different responses teaching this in summer term Year 2 or spring term Year 1, for example.

Step 5 (optional):

- Show pictures of famous people from the 5 jobs. We have included some images in the slide show but are limited by copyright. Please do find and show more examples (from books or online), particularly if you'd like to use 'famous people' local to your school. Discuss how men and women can be anything.
- If you have time, some of the images could be supplied by staff or parents / carers with non-stereotyped jobs. E.g. show a male teacher or male nursery nurse (though not the Headteacher!), or a male chef or cook in the school kitchen.
- Ask the class if this discussion has changed what they think they can be when they grow up? What are the skills they need for their dream job? Remind pupils that there are no 'jobs for girls' or 'jobs for boys' - only jobs that need to be done and anyone can decide which ones they would like to do.

Step 6:

- Show Redraw the Balance video - <https://www.inspiringthefuture.org/redraw-the-balance/>



1 Only 14% of nursery and primary school teachers are male. However, female teachers are less likely than their male counterparts to be in leadership positions. Source: School workforce in England, National Statistics, 2023. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

Appendix 1

Supporting Information



Classroom
activity

Extension activities

- Ask pupils to draw what they want to be when they grow up.
- Ask pupils to draw a dancer / astronaut / footballer etc and ask them to give their footballer / dancer / astronaut a name and then talk about if they are male or female, and why.
- To extend this activity even further, invite parents / carers who do non-stereotypical jobs to come in and talk about their jobs, or invite in local members of the community. E.g. female GP, male or female chef at a local restaurant, female plumber, female gamer, male hairdresser, female politician.

Glossary (for teachers and practitioners)

- Stereotype - fixed and widely held ideas about a group of people based on a shared characteristic – e.g. sex, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality.
 - Gender stereotype - socially constructed roles and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men, girls and boys.
 - Gender stereotypes are often seen in assumptions about behaviours, occupations, physical appearance or personality traits – for example that a girl will be nurturing, feminine, care about her appearance and prefer reading and art to maths and science. Or that boys are boisterous, confident and would rather be running around with a football than reading or drawing.
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