

## Guidelines for Book Producers, Parents and Teachers to Promote Gender Equality

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### For Book Producers

<b>Character appearances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include roughly equal numbers of male and female characters in the book series.</li> <li>● Have a fair distribution of females and males, including humans and animals, in the leading and supporting roles.</li> <li>● Animal characters such as bears, wolves, tigers and lions are not necessarily males, and butterflies and birds are not necessarily females.</li> <li>● Present females and males in non-traditional roles.</li> </ul>
<b>Character attributes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Male and female characters should share a broad range of characteristics regardless of their sex: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Males can be gentle, quiet, considerate, emotional, nurturing and sensitive to others.</li> <li>➢ Females can be assertive, independent, courageous, adventurous, sporty, brave and naughty.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● To challenge gender stereotypes, consider engaging the characters in activities that are traditionally reserved for the opposite sex.</li> <li>● Both females and males are vulnerable to accidents and may need help from others. They can also both be heroic and offer help.</li> <li>● Provide parallel descriptions. Avoid describing females based on their physical attributes and males based on their achievements.</li> </ul>
<b>Dialogues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seek a gender balance in dialogues, in terms of the number of speakers and turns, their utterances, as well as discourse functions (e.g. giving</li> </ul>

	commands, following instructions, agreeing, making requests, initiating, interrupting etc.).
<b>Social roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Challenge gender stereotypes in job descriptions. Show women and men in a wide variety of careers. They can both be doctors, nurses, paramedics, dentists, pilots, school principals, teachers, athletes, firefighters, dancers, secretaries, shop owners and assistants, drivers, construction workers, babysitters etc.</li> <li>● Both sexes can play a leading or subordinate role. Boys should not be conditioned to believe that they should have a higher income level and status than girls when they grow up. Girls should not be conditioned to believe that they are born to be subordinate to males.</li> <li>● Create characters that challenge conventional gender roles. For example, a female character can be depicted as a superhero who rescues lives in a catastrophe.</li> <li>● Portray the achievements of female characters on the basis of their own wisdom and abilities, not their appearance or relationship with others.</li> </ul>
<b>Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include a roughly equal number of female (e.g. <i>wife, mother, aunt</i>) and male familial roles (e.g. <i>husband, father, grandfather</i>).</li> <li>● Don't assume that all married women are full-time mothers. In reality, many women continue to work after getting married and having children.</li> <li>● Include different family types. In addition to families with two parents and children, to reflect reality there could be families with single parents or couples without children, same-sex parents with or without children, and households with single women or men.</li> <li>● Depict family roles and relationships in non-stereotyped ways. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avoid frequently portraying homemaking and childrearing mothers. Both males and females can be responsible for home maintenance and household chores such as cooking, cleaning, dish-washing, grocery shopping, wall painting, repairing electronic appliances and fixing things in the garage.</li> <li>2. Avoid perpetuating the stereotype that men are the sole breadwinners in their families, and are withdrawn and disengaged from childcare.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Both sexes have equal opportunity in subject choices. Don't confine female teachers and girls to domestic science and crafts, and male teachers and boys to science-related subjects.</li> </ul>
<b>Use of language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Avoid sexist language that excludes or demeans females.</li> </ul>

1. Avoid using generic masculine nouns (e.g. *chairman, spokesman, policeman, fireman, postman, fisherman*) and pronouns (*he, him, his, himself*) to represent human and animal characters of unknown sex.
2. Use gender-neutral vocabulary with the morphemes *-person, -clerk, -officer* and *-fighter*  
e.g. *businessperson, salesperson, salesclerk, police officer* and *fire fighter*
3. Use gender-neutral synonyms as substitutes
  - × *businessman* ✓ *businessperson* ✓ *trader* ✓ *entrepreneur*
  - × *chairman* ✓ *chairperson* ✓ *chair* ✓ *president*
  - × *fisherman* ✓ *fisher*
  - × *headmaster/headmistress* ✓ *principal* ✓ *school head*
  - × *housewife* ✓ *homemaker*
  - × *policeman* ✓ *police officer*
  - × *postman* ✓ *post courier*
  - × *salesman* × *salesgirl* ✓ *salesperson* ✓ *salesclerk* ✓ *shop assistant*
  - × *spaceman* ✓ *astronaut*
  - × *sportsman* ✓ *athlete*
  - × *stewardess* ✓ *flight attendant*
4. Use the plural form or the pronouns *they* or *he or she* when the sex is unknown or not specified.
  - × *the breadwinner ... his earnings* ✓ *the breadwinner ... his or her earnings*
  - × *the house cleaner ... she* ✓ *the house cleaners ... they*
  - × *the police officer ... he* ✓ *the police officer ... s/he*
5. Avoid the following practices:
  - a) Using gender-marked suffixes (e.g. *poetess, stewardess, usherette, waitress*)
  - b) Focussing on physical appearance for females (e.g. *a beautiful blonde; her hair shimmers like a lake in moonlight*)
  - c) Using descriptions or figurative language to portray women as weak and helpless (e.g. *a fragile flower*)
6. Never assume all the readers are males.
  - × *You and your wife* ✓ *You and your spouse*
  - × *Shave before hanging out* ✓ *Take a shower before hanging out*
7. Use parallel language for both sexes.
  - × *The men and the ladies* ✓ *The men and the women*

	<p>✓ <i>The ladies and the gentlemen</i> ✓ <i>The girls and the boys</i></p> <p>× <i>man and wife</i>                      ✓ <i>husband and wife</i></p> <p>8. Address females and males symmetrically, using their full names, first names or last names with/without neutral titles.</p> <p>× <i>Peter Chan and Janice</i>              ✓ <i>Peter Chan and Janice Wong</i></p> <p>× <i>Mr Li and Mabel</i>                      ✓ <i>Mr Li and Ms Chan</i>     ✓ <i>Li and Chan</i>     ✓ <i>Mabel and David</i></p> <p>× <i>Mr Fung and Miss Kwok</i>              ✓ <i>Mr Fung and Ms Kwok</i></p> <p>× <i>Prof Bunton and Ann's mum</i>      ✓ <i>Ann's mother and father</i></p> <p>9. Avoid using gender-biased titles.</p> <p>× <i>Mrs Collins</i>    × <i>Miss Black</i>      ✓ <i>Ms Hoare</i></p>
<b>Order of presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Alternate the order of mention of the two sexes: Male-first: <i>Dad and Mum, boys and girls, Peter and Jade</i> Female-first: <i>my mum and dad, women and men, Tiffany and Jerry</i></li> </ul>
<b>Illustrations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Actors and recipients: Avoid frequently presenting males as more active and powerful than females. For example, it does not need to be a boy touching a girl on the shoulder; the actor and the recipient can be reversed.</li> <li>● Appearance: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Females and males should be treated with the same dignity and respect.</li> <li>2. Boys are not necessarily taller, heavier, stronger or more active and sporty than girls.</li> <li>3. Girls do not necessarily have long hair or wear dresses/skirts. Older women may not wear earrings or other jewellery.</li> <li>4. Have a fair distribution of female/male solo appearances to indicate that the two sexes are equally independent or communal.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Colours: Avoid colour stereotypes (pink for girls, blue for boys) in relation to toys, clothing, accessories, furniture, personal belongings, image backgrounds etc.</li> <li>● Toys:</li> </ul>

1. Avoid gendered toys that conform to society's gender norms, such as dolls, teddy bears and skipping ropes for girls, and toy cars, robots and balls for boys.
  2. Use visual images that encourage young children to play with different kinds of toys. Reverse the gendered toys for boys and girls, or show gender-neutral toys to encourage children to explore their own interests.
- Visual techniques in gender positioning:
    1. Both male and female characters should be represented in equal numbers of close-ups, medium shots and long shots to achieve equality in social distance.
    2. Male and female protagonists can both have direct eye contact with the viewers at eye level to signify symbolic involvement with the readers.
    3. Have an even number of males and females as the central figures in images.
    4. When both parents are present in a picture, don't frequently present the child(ren) closer to the mother than to the father.
  - Familial settings:
    1. Include a balanced representation of females and males in familial settings.
    2. Females should not be frequently portrayed as apron-wearing mothers and men as uninvolved fathers in the family. Both parents can be affectionate nurturers and caregivers, and both can be engaged in household activities such as preparing meals, changing the baby, doing the laundry and washing dishes. Both parents can also wear protective clothing to assemble furniture and make repairs, or drive a car for family outings.
  - Foreground:
 

Depict female characters in the foreground of visuals as much as male characters.
  - Background:
 

Avoid gender stereotypes in the depiction of supporting roles. For example, have mixed genders for drivers, shop assistants, doctors, builders and zoo keepers in the background of visuals.

## For Parents and Teachers

### Book selection

- Teachers and parents should make a concerted effort to select books that are equally representative of the two sexes and minority groups. Avoid choosing books that contain blatant or implicit discrimination.
- Choose books with the following features in visual images and/or written texts:
  1. Promote positive values and equality.
  2. The topics promote understanding of women and men – they can have similar interests, feelings, attributes, abilities, achievements, aspirations and domestic responsibilities.
  3. Have bias-free visual images and written texts, with a roughly even representation of females and males in terms of their appearances and the roles performed.
  4. Challenge gender stereotyping and prejudice in terms of character attributes, occupations, toys and games, leisure activities, familial and social roles, colours etc.
  5. Emphasise human potential and characteristics rather than gender differences.
  6. Use gender-neutral language (e.g. *'police officer'* instead of *'policeman'*, *'firefighter'* instead of *'fireman'*).
  7. Avoid male/mum-firstness. Alternate the order of presentation of the two sexes.
  8. Practise symmetrical character identification and naming methods, and avoid identifying males by their name and/or occupation, and females by their relationships with others.
- Don't categorise the books into those aimed at 'boys' and 'girls'. Boys can read books about dancing, crafts and fairy tales, and girls can read books about football, pirates and treasure islands.
- Have a good balance of books written by male and female authors from different backgrounds.
- Have a good balance of books with female central characters as well as male central characters, including animal and fantasy books.
- Select books that show boys and girls playing and working together to achieve common goals.
- Include books with male characters showing caring and nurturing skills, as well as books with female characters demonstrating leadership and physical and/or mental strength.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have a good range of non-fiction books that characterise the two sexes in non-stereotyped roles.</li> <li>● Include biographies of famous women and men as artists, musicians, scientists, explorers etc.</li> </ul>
<b>When reading books to/with children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be aware of any hidden gender stereotypes and inequalities (e.g. asymmetrical character identification and naming methods, use of gender-biased language, order of presentation, dominance of males/females as central/supporting characters, foregrounding and backgrounding, gendered colours (pink for girls and blue for boys) etc.).</li> <li>● Instead of endorsing or ignoring gender biases that appear in the story, try to subvert them by seeking out gender-balanced supplementary materials, reversing gender roles in reading or role plays, joking, discussion, and drawing children's attention to the difference in reality.</li> <li>● Avoid and challenge the use of sexist language and statements.</li> <li>● Help children to develop gender awareness and critical literacy. Teach them how to identify gender biases and interpret the written texts and visuals through content and linguistic analyses.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask children to examine the attributes of the male and female protagonists and the activities they perform, their social and familial roles, as well as the language used by the writers to depict and address the protagonists.</li> <li>2. Ask children to comment on the book on the basis of gender. Provide opportunities for children to discuss any gender (in)equity present in books and relate the story to their life experience:                 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Who and what is included/excluded in this text? Where is the father/mother? Who does the housework in your family? Do your father and mother work as family providers?</li> <li>b) What is another term for 'policeman'? Why is it unacceptable to call 'Susan' a policeman?</li> <li>c) What kind of world is presented as the normal social order in the story? Is this happening in our society at the moment? What has made the change? Do you think that it is a good or bad change?</li> <li>d) Are any of the images different from what we see in reality?</li> <li>e) Whose interest does this story serve, and how can it be challenged?</li> <li>f) How would the story change if the leading character was not a girl/boy?</li> <li>g) What would happen to these characters if they did not conform to other people's expectations?</li> <li>h) Do you think that we should behave in the way that the characters have behaved? Why or why not?</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ul>

- Help children develop visual literacy by drawing their attention to how illustrators use visual symbols such as gaze, gesture, facial expression, body size, clothing, activity, characters' possessions (e.g. toys and playthings), colours, spatial positioning, foregrounding and backgrounding etc. to construct meaning and demonstrate relations and power.
- In role plays, don't assign roles, character attributes, occupations or family responsibilities based on gender stereotypes (e.g. males as doctors or breadwinners, and females as nurses or homemakers).
- Provide opportunities for children to compare classic stories with contemporary retellings. Ask them to spot the differences in terms of the content, plot, settings, character traits and/or language use, and discuss why there are such differences.
- Provide supplementary materials of various text types (e.g. photos, songs, videos) to expose children to different perspectives on the same topic, so as to let children explore the issues using a critical eye.
- Help children to relate any inequalities that appear in texts to those that exist in their daily lives.
- Provide opportunities for children to write about their thoughts and personal responses.