# How to raise a child without gender biases

**Source: Akhila Das Blah, Content Writer & Educational Consultant**

From the time that we are born, we are put into boxes. We are immediately labelled a boy or a girl. While there is nothing wrong with being either gender, problems arise when we are forced to accept everything that comes packed in each gender box. Boys wear blue. Girls wear pink. Boys are boisterous. Girls are soft-spoken. Boys are strong. Girls are the weaker sex. Boys should not cry. Girls should not shout. Boys like cars. Girls like dolls. Boys must play a sport. Girls must learn to dance and sing.

As parents, we have to raise our children to be the best versions of them, whatever that may mean for each individual child. So, how do we do this?

## ****Start early****

Consciously avoid stereotyping your child. Provide him or her with ample opportunities to extend themselves. When in a toy shop, encourage your child to step away from the obvious. Your daughter may just discover a mechanical set she loves. Your son may enjoy making you endless cups of imaginary tea from his kitchen set.

## ****Set up mixed gender play dates****

We often tend to organize same gender play dates because we assume that our child will have more in common with children from the same gender. When you organize mixed gender play dates at an early age, both girls and boys learn from each other. Boys learn to sit for longer periods and communicate more. They learn empathy. Girls learn to run around and take things in their stride. If they fall, they learn to pick themselves up and carry on. As your child grows, ensure that they maintain healthy relationships with children of the opposite gender.

## ****Set the same rules and boundaries****

A child doesn’t jump on the sofa because he is a boy. He jumps on the sofa because he is allowed. Don’t excuse bad behaviour on account of their gender. Some children have extra energy. Get them to burn off the excess energy by running around downstairs or spending a little bit more time in the park. Teach your children the difference between indoor and outdoor play. If a child is rough in their play, it’s because they haven’t been taught better. Teach them to be gentle while playing with others. Encourage them to use their words instead of actions.

## ****Expose them to different activities****

In their early years, enroll your son and daughter in dance, art, music and sports classes. A wide range of activities will help their all round development and growth. Encourage them to read books or watch movies with different female and male protagonists. Discuss the underlying themes. Teach them to look at life from another person’s point of view. As they grow, teach them different life skills. Both your son and daughter must learn to cook, sew, iron, wash clothes and dishes and manage household chores. Both of them need to learn the importance of financial management. Teach them to drive, change a tire and fix a light bulb. These are essential life skills that your children will need when they live independently.

## ****Be role models****

Children emulate their parents. If they see their father sitting on the couch, while their mother serves tea or sets the table, they subconsciously register these roles in their minds. Switch roles once in a while. Society has programmed us to accept the male as the bread-winner and the female as the homemaker. Challenge those notions. It’s important for your children to see that both parents have an equal role to play. Have conversations about the importance of both parents and how you support one another. Talk to them about choices. If a parent is a stay at home parent, it’s a deliberate choice that they have made to take time off to raise their child for the benefit of the whole family. Neither parent nor role is more important than the other.

We are a product of our parents and the society we live in. By doing our bit to raise sensitive sons and fearless daughters, we can slowly but steadily change the perception of men and women in society and the roles that they play.