

## Reading 1

### GROWING UP MALE OR FEMALE

Newborn babies do not know if they are boys or girls, but it does not take them long to find out. They very quickly learn the way that their society expects males and females to behave and think. That is, they learn their gender roles.

*Children must learn their gender roles*



### Children and gender roles

5 From the moment of birth, babies are usually treated according to their gender. In the United States and in many western countries, baby girls tend to be dressed in pink clothing and baby boys in blue. Baby girls are handled more gently than boys. Girls are cuddled and kissed while boys are more frequently bounced around and lifted high in the  
10 air. Girls are often given dolls whereas boys are given cars, trucks, and building blocks. Mothers think about how pretty their little girls look but are less concerned about their little boys' appearance.

*babies, starting at birth, are treated differently based on gender*

Parents socialize boys and girls differently. Socialization is the process of transferring values and standards of behavior to new  
15 members of a group so that they can fit into society. There are differences in the way parents talk to their children. Parents use words about feelings and emotions more with girls than with boys, and, by age two, girls use these words more than boys do. Furthermore, mothers and fathers talk differently because of their own socialization  
20 experiences. Mothers tend to talk more politely. They may say, "Could you turn off the TV, please?" whereas fathers tend to use more direct language, "Turn off the TV." By age four, girls and boys have learned to imitate these conversational styles.

*Socialization*

Examples of gender-based socialization

25 Little girls are generally socialized to be ladylike – polite and quiet. They are taught to rely on others – especially males – for help. They are allowed to express their emotions more freely. Girls learn the importance of being pretty. They may even learn that they must rely more on their beauty than on their intelligence. In contrast, boys are taught to behave “like men.” Boys are also encouraged to be  
30 independent and strong and to avoid being “mama’s boys.” They are told that boys don’t cry. As a result, boys may grow up with a fear of being feminine and, as young men, try to keep up a macho, that is, very masculine, image.

Socialization from peers as children grow

### Growing into gender roles

35 Socialization into gender roles continues as children grow up and learn from their peers. Boys play rough games with their friends. They are physical and competitive in their play. Parents and teachers often accept that this is normal for boys. Boys who do not engage in this kind of behavior are often teased. Boys’ friendships are often based on physical ability and dominant behavior. Girls, on the other hand,  
40 tend to play more quietly in smaller groups of friends. They have more intense friendships, based on emotional connections and shared secrets. They also focus more on their appearance than boys do and may tease girls who are not attractive.

Parents & their expectations

45 Parents also have different expectations of daughters and sons as they grow up. Daughters, more than sons, are socialized to think about the family. For example, they are expected to remember birthdays, to spend time with the family on holidays, and, when they get older, to provide care for sick family members and relatives. Sons are not expected to do these things as much.

50 Sons are often given more freedom than daughters. Parents often expect their sons be more interested in the world outside the family and more independent of the family in social activities than their daughters. Many parents also believe that daughters need more protection than sons. For example, they may require their daughters  
55 to come home earlier at night and forbid them to go to places where they might let their sons go. Such protectiveness often discourages girls from being independent and exploring their environment.

gender-neutral  
the same for both  
sexes

### Resisting traditional gender roles

60 From parents, teachers, and their peers, boys and girls learn the gender roles that society expects them to play. Increasingly today, many parents try to bring up their children in a **gender-neutral** way. They encourage their sons to express their feelings. They encourage their daughters to be independent. However, parents may find it difficult to bring up their children in a gender-neutral way. They are continually fighting against the gender lessons of television, books,  
65 peers, and school.

new approach to parenting