

## \*\*\* SAMPLE CHAPTER \*\*\*

# Create a Gender-Equal (and Civil!) Home Environment

---

As gender-equality progress evolves, it's more important than ever to create a gender-equal foundation at home to guide girls toward equality confidence.

The most basic principle of creating a gender-equal household is to treat all family members equally in every possible way. The following suggestions will help you build a gender-equal household, so your girl can mimic an equitable foundation as she weaves her way through life.

### Step 1. Chores

With chores, two principles are crucial for building an equitable household: 1) Children should help equally with household tasks regardless of gender; and 2) Both genders can and should help with both outside and inside chores.

First, try to keep in mind that chores are practice for adult living. If boys are allowed to continue playing video games while girls help in the kitchen, that's the model for fairness that your girl will take into her adult life.

Second, try to refrain from assigning outside chores to boys (e.g. mow the lawn) and inside chores to girls (e.g. empty the dishwasher).

Girls need opportunities that not only stretch beyond traditional roles, but also help build a foundation of self-sufficiency. If your girl learns how to mow the lawn now, she will be better prepared for a gender-equal life as an adult.

It might take a few tries to perfect a task, and you might have to do some up-front heavy lifting/training, but that will subside.

Of course, you know your children best and it's your decision to assign the amount and type of household chores based on developmental and physical ability. That said, here are some ideas that defy the 'typical' boy/girl chore assignments:

### **Boys:**

- empty the dishwasher
- do the dishes
- make the dinner salad
- organize the grocery list
- feed the family pet(s)
- set the table
- vacuum
- sweep
- learn to use washing machine and start a load of laundry
- fold laundry
- pick up clutter
- dust
- help care for baby and/or ailing grandparent

### **Girls:**

- yardwork - raking, weeding, mow lawn, etc
- stack the firewood
- walk the dog (safely)
- unload grocery bags from car
- replace light bulbs
- empty indoor wastebaskets and recycle bins
- wheel outside trash and recycle cans to street
- wash windows
- collect dirty laundry from family members
- collect pet waste (if you have a yard and a dog)
- wash family car(s)
- clean garage
- auto repair

If your kid(s) complain about their tasks, listen to their protests and ask how they would make it more equitable. Talk about it together. They need to feel like they're part of the discussion.

Ask if they think they can continue with their assigned chores for another week. Hopefully, they'll agree, their complaints will wane, and then disappear altogether. If not, you might consider rotating tasks so everyone gets to try their hand at everything.

Repeat these words as often as you can:

*'There's no such thing as men's work or women's work—it's all just work.'*

## Step 2. Allowance

Equal pay? Yes! Absolutely!

Although there are a few signs that the gap is shrinking, most data shows that starting as early as childhood allowance, girls are still paid less than boys for doing the same work.

If you've already established a standard amount for weekly allowance, give your girl and boy the exact same amount.

Just like you did with chores, if they start whining about who does more, listen to their concerns, ask how they would make it more equitable (without saddling you with more work or expense), and compromise. It's important for them to know (especially your girl) that their opinion matters.

If there are special circumstances in any given week (e.g., special chores for bonus pay, sick child, conflicting family obligations, etc.), try to balance-out opportunities and payments in the ensuing weeks.

Additionally, it might be necessary to have a conversation with them about gender pay discrimination. Here's a wonderful video that makes the unfairness of unequal pay easy to understand:

[Kids React to The Gender Pay Gap \(video\)](#)

## Step 3. Sibling arguments

Sibling squabbles are unavoidable. They come with the territory of being a parent to more than one child. And the long-overdue movement towards gender equality has introduced yet another reason for siblings to disagree.

But it doesn't have to get nasty.

Yes, girls are starting to understand (hopefully!) that they are not the weaker gender. But that doesn't mean they need to be unkind about standing up for themselves.

Here are some ideas for guiding your girl toward standing up for herself and softening her message at the same time.

If you notice your girl using acrimonious jargon and/or gestures towards her brother (or whomever), take her aside and explain that being a reasonable male is a fairly new concept and lots of boys need gentle guidance and time to adjust.

Tell her that patience is a learned skill and you're confident she is the right person to help him learn. Guide her toward helping him by being the teacher and using calm language.

The point of guiding your girl toward a teaching role is to give her back some of the autonomy that she feels like she's losing.

Give her examples of calm language and understanding. Suggest that she use phrases like:

- *'That doesn't seem fair to me. Can we compromise so it's fair to both of us?'*
- *'What if I did that to you? Wouldn't you feel like I was being unfair?'*
- *'I already know how to xyz. You don't need to explain it to me. But thank you anyway.'*

(Or use whatever language is appropriate for her age.)

Let them talk it through on their own. Don't engage unless you feel like their conversation is headed in the wrong direction. The goal here is to let them practice discussing the problem and reaching a compromise on their own. A valuable life skill!

If your girl still isn't making progress about whatever point she's trying to get across, tell her she can come to you and you'll work it out together. She needs to know that she has a reliable ally.

#### **Step 4. Model gender-equal household behavior**

In an ideal world, both parents (if there are two) should be doing an equal amount of housework and both parents should be contributing the same amount of work hours outside the home.

But we don't live in ideal world, and families come in all shapes and sizes, so the 50/50 scenario is a great goal, but not always realistic. Whatever division of labor you and your partner can contribute towards the ideal 50/50 scenario is best.

Try to keep in mind that although it might not seem obvious at the time, the words your girl hears and the actions she sees are etching a permanent opinion in her psyche.

For everyday conversations, try to use words that avoid gender bias. For example, the words *policeman* and *stewardess* are gender-specific job titles; the corresponding gender-neutral terms are *police officer* and *flight attendant*.

(You can always google 'biased language examples' if you need more examples.)

Another thing to be aware of is your attitude toward gender-inequality in the media. If your girl hears you make a comment about a sexist TV show, commercial, or movie, she'll mimic your opinion.

While you're watching media together, make a remark about how fair or unfair a certain scene is. Then talk about how it used to be accepted that men were superior to women, but that mindset is thankfully changing.

Tell her how lucky she is to be young and alive during such a positive social movement where opportunities for girls like her are finally appearing.

Make sure this concept sinks in. She needs to feel like this is a special time for her.

## Step 5. Toys/gadgets

Traditionally, the world of toys has been sexist. Marketing campaigns have been wrongly based on the theory that girls only play with creative or social toys and boys only play with spatial or digital toys.

The good news is that things are slowly changing. Many toy manufacturers are no longer explicitly marketing their products solely based on gender. And retailers are starting to replace pink and blue toy aisles with gender-neutral toy aisles. Parents need to get on-board too.

If you provide toys that are traditionally geared toward boys alongside toys that are traditionally geared toward girls, your girl will naturally gravitate toward the toy(s) that appeal the strongest to her innate passions and capabilities.

Who knows? Maybe she's a born nurturer and will naturally gravitate toward dolls, but she should at least be given options.

Here are some toys that are traditionally associated with boys that should also be available to girls:

- construction vehicles
- Legos
- toy cars
- model airplanes/rockets
- magnetic building sets
- puzzles
- science kits
- sports equipment
- action figures
- train sets
- robots
- binoculars
- microscopes
- remote-control racing/flying devices

Electronic gadgets (e.g., smart phones, tablets, laptops, etc.) follow the same guidelines as gender-based "toys."

Use an online shopping resource to let your girl choose the gadget "flavor" that appeals to her. If she wants the laptop decorated with the solar system instead of ballerinas, let her have it.

## **More Resources for Creating a Gender-Equal Home**

- [Where the gender pay gap may start: At home](#)
- [Kids explain why women are paid less than men](#)
- [Beyond pink and blue: the quiet rise of gender-neutral toys](#)
- [17 Wonderful Gender-Neutral Toys for Kids](#)
- [Gender-neutral language - Wikipedia](#)