



Under 11s

# Gender stereotypes online: what you need to know

If you've completed [The Online Together Project skills tool](#) or just want to learn more about the topic, this summary advice on gender stereotypes online can be a great help.

Use it as a learning tool together with friends or family to get more familiar with the topic and have meaningful conversations.



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# 1. What interests do you think most people who like watching gaming videos online have?

## What you need to know

It can be easy to assume that because someone likes to do a particular thing online, they are more likely to do something else that fits in with what we think they should be like. However, It is important to remember that people of all ages and backgrounds enjoy a range of activities and have the right to do so no matter who they are. Everyone should be able to make their own choices about the things they like to wear, do and enjoy, and that includes playing video games online if they want to.

One thing that does matter when playing games online is your age. You should choose and play games that are suitable for your age and maturity. Did you know that you can even find [amazing games](#) to play with your family?

### For parents & carers:

Getting involved in your child's gameplay and how they interact with others when playing online can be a great way to understand how best to support them. To learn more about online video games, benefits and risks, [visit our Online Gaming Advice hub](#).

## Discuss these questions

*Based on what you have seen online, do you think there are other things that we guess about people based on what they do, post or share? What might those be? Do you think there is any danger in making guesses about someone based on what we think they should act like on or offline?*



## 2. What would you say to someone if they lost an online video game and got upset?

### What you need to know

Sometimes it can be easy to say things online that you probably would not say in real life. You can be caught up in the game and get upset if someone you are playing with loses the game.

In those moments, if you feel like saying something hurtful or are just too upset, pressing pause to calm down before carrying on can help.

Keeping things positive and being respectful is key. Remember to always treat others how you would like to be treated on and offline.

### For parents & carers:

There are a number of games and apps that have been developed to help children manage their emotions and encourage kind behaviour, compassion, and empathy. [See our list of wellbeing apps to learn more.](#)

You can also find [Media Smarts tip sheet](#) on talking to children about gender stereotypes or [Common Sense Media article](#) on recognising harmful gender stereotypes.

### Discuss these questions

*How do you feel when you lose a video game online? If someone loses and gets upset about it, it's a good idea to support them, rather than make fun of them. You can tell them - "it's okay, sometimes I lose too."*

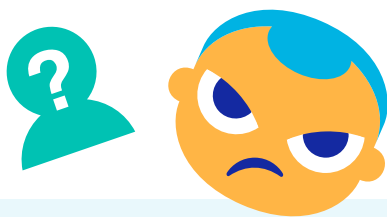


## 3. If you see that someone has used an image of a truck as their online profile picture, what do you think about the person?

### What you need to know

As a stereotype we might think that liking trucks and cars is connected to being tough and manly - but actually, any group of people can like trucks and cars if that is what they are interested in. Someone might like trucks and cars and like dancing or art or dolls as well.

It can be easy for us to assume something about someone just because of the things they like but remember everyone is different and likes things for different reasons.



Another thing that is important to know is that some people online may use an avatar to pretend to be something they are not and seek to do harm to you online. So, it is important to not be too trusting just because someone has used a certain avatar as their profile image.

### For parents & carers:

For more support download our [Online Critical Thinking guide](#) to help children make smarter, safer and kinder choices online. You can also watch [this film from UK Safer Internet Centre](#) with your child. The short film looks at a range of children creating avatars online and discussing the choices they make about how they represent themselves.

### Discuss these questions

*Imagine you have a friend who loves trucks, and chooses to use them as their profile picture online but someone tells them they can't like trucks because of who they are – How might they feel? How could you support them? What do you see on TV, in videos or other places online that may make someone believe this?*



## 4. If you see that someone has used an image of a princess as their avatar, what do you think about the person?

### What you need to know

As a stereotype we might think that liking a princess avatar is connected to being a girl but in fact, anyone can like princesses for all sorts of reasons. It could be that they like the colours or it reminds them of a video game character they like or simply because it's cute.

Don't be quick to judge someone just because they may like something others have said is only for a specific group of people. People are unique and different so we should celebrate this to create a safer online space for them to be who they want to be.

### For parents & carers

For more support download [Online.Critical.Thinking.guide](#) to help children make smarter, safer and kinder choices online.

You can also [visit Lifting.Limits](#) which offers guides for families to learn about gender stereotypes particularly aimed at primary school-age children.

### Discuss these questions

*If your friend loves princesses and often likes to choose them as avatars in games but someone tells them not to use them because they are for girls - how might they feel, what would you do to support them? What do you see on TV, in videos or other places online that may make someone believe this?*



## 5. What should pictures of girls “always” include?

### What you need to know

When you use the word ‘always’, you are putting everyone in the same group which is often untrue. Any group of people might like the colour pink and sparkles - and that is their right to enjoy these things. When we make assumptions about the things someone should like just because of who they are, we are adding to gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes tell us that people have to like, wear and do certain things, and are not allowed to like, wear and do other things - for example, the gender stereotype that only girls like the colour pink. We know that everybody is unique. Everyone should be able to like, wear and do the things they enjoy. Some girls love pink, and that is okay - other groups of people also love pink, and that is okay too!

### For parents & carers:

For more support [download our Online Critical Thinking guide](#) to help children make smarter, safer and kinder choices online.



### Discuss these questions

*Do you think it is fair for people to be told they are not allowed to like or do certain things just because of who they are? How would you feel if someone told you that YOU could not do something just because of who you are?*



## 6. What should pictures of boys “always” include?

### What you need to know

Many groups of people can like cars, trucks, scientists or athletes, and it is okay for any person to enjoy these things. When we make assumptions about the things someone will like just because they are a certain sex, we are adding to gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes tell us what a particular group of people should like, wear and do certain things, and are not allowed to like, wear and do other things. Everyone should be able to like, wear and do the things they enjoy.

### For parents & carers:

To improve children and young people's understanding of what images they see online can represent, have regular conversations about what they think about the type of images they see online. Through conversation you can draw out these stereotypes and help them break down any misconception that they may have. For more support [download our Online Critical Thinking guide](#) to help children make smarter, safer and kinder choices online.

### Discuss these questions

*Do you think it is fair to tell someone they can't like a particular topic because of who they are?*

*How would you feel if someone told you that YOU could not do something just because of who you are?*



## 7. If I see someone saying mean things online I can...

### What you need to know

People sometimes say mean things online because it makes them feel powerful or they may be hurt themselves. But whatever the reason, hurting someone else's feelings is not kind - it is just mean. When we see or experience mean things being said online, it is important to support those who are being affected, report it and get the support of a trusted adult. [See our Stop, Speak, Support video](#) to see how you can play your part to support others who may be the target of the mean comments,

### For parents & carers:

As children spend more time interacting with each other online, it's important to help them recognise behaviours that [can spread harmful content](#).

### Discuss these questions

*How do you feel when someone laughs at you or a friend? How do you feel when someone says something mean about you or a friend? What can you do to feel better or to help your friend feel better?*





# 8. In an online game a player makes a comment about another player, 'You play like a girl.' What do you do?

## What you need to know

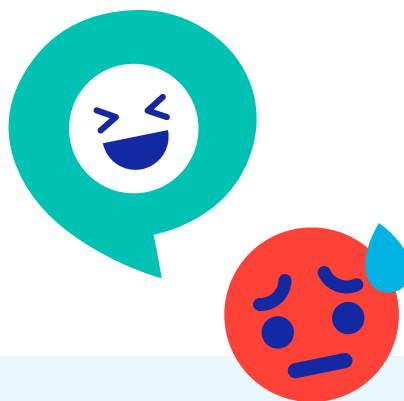
It can be tempting if you are under pressure or scared to not say anything or laugh it off but this type of comment is not okay.

You have the right to play as you would like, no matter who you are. If someone says that to you, let them know how you feel so they know how it has affected you and know not to do it again.

You are you and that is what makes you unique. Other players are also unique because we are all different. Yet we can also be the same because our feelings can be hurt when people use hurtful language.

## For parents & carers:

Talk to your child regularly about their experiences while online, particularly if they feel they cannot express themselves as they want to. [See our Online identity series](#) to learn more about how children form their identity online and what you can do to support them.



## Discuss these questions

*What does it mean to say that someone plays like a girl or plays like a boy? Why might someone think that is hurtful language?*



## 9. When I play in a game online or virtual world...

### What you need to know

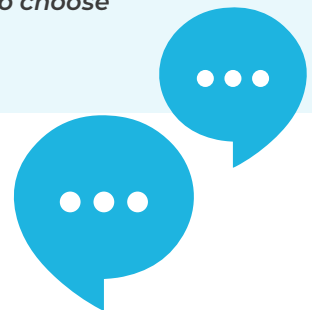
You can be whatever you want to be, a scientist, a nurse, a doctor, a teacher, a ballet dancer, an athlete. If you can dream it, you can become it.

### For parents & carers:

The online world can be a great place for children to experiment with their identity and be creative about how they express themselves. To help them do this safely and smartly [see our guide](#) to helping young people manage their online identity.

### Discuss these questions

*What are you thinking about when you choose your avatar? Do you feel free to choose whatever you like?*



# 10. When someone says something I do not agree with online...

## What you need to know

We do not have to agree with everyone, but we do have to respect differences. Being online, we have the responsibility to be kind, just as we should do in the real world. It is important to understand the difference between [good and bad manners online](#).

If someone says something to you online that you do not agree with, be considerate of the words you use and respect each other's opinion. Consider agreeing to disagree and leaving it there if you cannot agree.

It is okay to have different opinions on things however, it is not okay to make someone feel bad because they do not agree with you. There is a difference between somebody having a different opinion to you, and somebody using hate speech or hurtful language that is based on somebody's race, gender,

ethnic group, sexual orientation, disability or religion. Hate speech is illegal and should always be reported. If someone says something about you online that makes you feel bad about who you are, seek the support of a trusted adult and consider blocking that person or not engaging with them. You can [visit True Vision](#) to report an online hate crime.

### For parents & carers:

Through conversations, help children understand that the world is diverse so they are able to be more accepting of others who are different to them. Make sure not to pretend differences do not exist but try to focus on why they make people special. Additional resources and ideas can be found in the [Top Internet Manners Guide](#) and here. Also, please look at [our Tackling Online Hate & Trolling guide](#) to learn how to talk to children about this subject so they can recognise hate speech online and know how to deal with it.

## Discuss these questions

*Has someone ever disagreed with what you said or did online? How did that make you feel? How did you react?*

