

Book Review Tool

This tool has been developed to help you to identify the messages your children are exposed to from the books available at your service. The book review tool is designed to be applied to individual books and gives an understanding of the overall messages and content.

This tool will help you use books to challenge gender stereotypes, embrace diversity and celebrate individuality.

Stereotypes are views about a particular group that are applied to everyone in the group. Examples include: all girls like playing with dolls and all boys like playing with trucks. Stereotypes can be harmful when they limit the way children think and feel about themselves, and how they interact with others.

This checklist can also help you to select books that embrace diversity. These can include race, culture and ethnicity, sexual orientation and ability.

As a general guide, books with characters that challenge or break traditional ideas about gender roles and femininity/masculinity are examples of good role models. Characters in such books should be shown positively and celebrated for their uniqueness. Ideally, these characters and their attributes are seen as being 'normal' rather than 'different but okay'. This helps to normalise people who do not conform to stereotypes and expectations relating to gender, culture, disability etc.

The book review tool does not recommend getting rid of any books, even if they are less diverse or inclusive. Rather, consider how to use these books to have conversations with children about how the books could be more gender diverse and inclusive.

It's important to consider all aspects of a book, including the storyline, characters and illustrations.

Selection

Depending on the number of books in your collection there are a variety of ways to select books to review, including:

> Using the Online Book Review Tool

Search to find books that have already been reviewed

- Put the appropriate sticker on the books that have already been reviewed
- Only review books that are not already in the system

> Snapshot of books on display

Review the books that are currently on display - this will provide an understanding of the messages in those books and how best to use them.

> Team activity

Encourage all staff to complete at least one book review. This activity is a great exercise for everyone as it prompts you to consider the messages that children are exposed to and how to best have conversations with them about those messages.

How to use this checklist:

1. Look through the checklist before reading the book.
This will help you to identify what to look for when you analyse the book.
2. Read the book.
3. Complete the checklist by placing a tick in the 'yes' or 'no' column for each question. Some questions might be best answered with a tick in both boxes. This is completely fine; just write a note to explain your decision.
4. Some questions might not fit with or apply to the book.
In this case, just tick the 'N/A' column.
5. At the end of the assessment, add up how many points your book has received so you can rate it green, orange or red.
6. Contact us for stickers to put in your books to use as a prompt when having conversations with children about the book.

Book title

Author

Illustrator

ISBN

Gender

Criteria	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Does the story challenge gender roles? <i>Examples of stereotypical gender roles: women looking after the children; men as the family breadwinner or 'Mr Fix-It'.</i>	2 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Do female and male characters in the story have the same opportunities?	1 pt.	0pt.	1 pt.	
Is it clear that female characters are not restricted to traditionally 'feminine' qualities and interests? <i>Traditional 'feminine' qualities include: caring, passive, beautiful, image-conscious, emotional, vulnerable, dependent.</i>	1 pt.	0pt.	1pt.	
Is it clear that male characters are not restricted to traditionally 'masculine' qualities and interests? <i>Traditional 'masculine' qualities include: strong, physical, aggressive, tough, protective, controlling, independent, unemotional.</i>	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Are female characters who have 'masculine' qualities or interests shown as normal? Are they welcomed and included?	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Are male characters who have more 'feminine' qualities or interests shown as normal? Are they welcomed and included?	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Are there both female and male characters in prominent or important roles?	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Does the book show that people who don't conform to gender stereotypes can be great friends with people who do?	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	

Diversity

Criteria	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Is diversity represented through any of the characters in the story?	2 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Cultural backgrounds?	1 pt.	0pt.	1 pt.	
Family types?	1 pt.	0pt.	1pt.	
Age ranges?	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Ability/disability?	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Variety of different body shapes and sizes?	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	
Was this diversity promoted in a positive way?	1 pt.	0 pt.	1 pt.	

Score (/17)

Count the number of ticks for each criteria and add up the points to work out the score to rate your book.

Rating	Description	Points
Green	The storyline and/or illustrations have positive messages around gender and/or diversity.	11-17
Orange	The storyline and/or illustrations includes aspects of gender and/or diversity.	5-10
Red	The storyline and/or illustrations do not actively promote gender or diversity.	0-4

Reflection

How could you use this book in your room to promote messages of embracing diversity and celebrating individuality?