

What is “Gender Specific” Clothing?

The dramatic play item expectations of the Environment Rating Scales place importance on helping children develop positive gender role identification. You may want to consider what types of clothing are considered gender specific. Because children are developing gender role identity during the preschool years, they require concrete examples of dress-up clothes that are associated with men and women. Work uniforms like chef shirts, firefighter and police uniforms, scrubs, etc. are wonderful additions to the dramatic play area but they are not gender specific because both men and women function in these roles. The goal is to encourage non-stereotyping in children as well as provide them with gender specific examples.

Ask yourself, “What can I provide to the children that will allow them to act out a role that is identified only with one sex, such as being “Mommy” or “Daddy”?

Some examples include:

<i>Female Dress-Up</i>	<i>Male Dress-Up</i>
Ladies’ flats and pumps	Men’s dress shirts and pants**
Purses	Top hat, derby, etc.
Flowery hats	Suspenders, bow ties, ties*
Lacey blouses**	Older boys’ dress shirts, suit jackets
Bathing suits	Swim trunks
Night gowns	Cub Scout and Boy Scout uniforms
Brownie and Girl Scout uniforms	

*Clip ties are best but if you cannot find clip ties, try adding Velcro to a regular tie so it doesn’t turn into a choking hazard.

**Men’s shirts button left to right, while women’s shirts button right to left.

It is also suggested that programs have additional items in storage which can be added to the dramatic play area when the accessible items are being laundered and/or to generate new interests and dramatic play possibilities.