

# STEREOTYPE-FREE SCHOOL

A method set for career and study choices  
free of gender stereotypes



# PROFESSIONS FOR WOMEN, PROFESSIONS FOR MEN?

Persistent gender stereotypes and role models still influence young people's choice of occupation and study. Despite comparable performance in school, clear differences are evident in vocational training and university studies.

Although there are around 330 dual vocational training occupations in Germany, the range of occupations chosen by young women and men is severely limited. More than half of young women concentrate on just 10 occupations, none of which are skilled trades. The situation is similar for young men: More than half concentrate on just 20 occupations that require training, most of which are technical occupations. Young men and women also go their separate ways when it comes to studying. Of the 10 most popular subjects, only business administration, economics and law are studied by both sexes. In some subjects - for example, languages, education, social work, mechanical engineering, computer science or electrical engineering - young women or young men largely remain among themselves.

## What is a stereotype?

Clichés or stereotypes are ingrained patterns of thought and behavior that refer to groups of people and associate them with certain attributions, behaviors, characteristics and abilities.

Gender stereotypes are assumptions about how women and men are supposed to be, how they think, feel, behave and what they are good at or not. We learn these attributions from birth. Young people often base their career choices on stereotypical ideas, thus severely limiting their range of career choices.

Gender stereotypes hinder girls and boys in the free development of their personality. They become entrenched in the course of our lives unless we critically question them.

Educational institutions encourage children and young people to make their own career and study choices in line with their individual interests, strengths and wishes. The method set **"Stereotype-Free School"** aims to support this process.

## Who can use the materials?

- ▶ Teachers of all types of schools
- ▶ School social workers
- ▶ Vocational counselors
- ▶ All those active in the area of career and study choices

## Get Involved!

Children and young people need support from people they trust so that they can open up to new views and experiences and learn to overcome stereotypes. Cliché-free teaching requires not only an appreciative attitude and action-oriented methods, but also facts and compact background information. With this set of materials, you will find helpful tips and suggestions for your preparation.

Support your students in finding occupations that match their individual strengths, interests and life aspirations.

The Initiative **Klischeefrei** wishes you every success and looks forward to your feedback!

# CAREER AND STUDY CHOICES FREE FROM GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotypes firmly anchored in society shape divisive notions of "femininity" and "masculinity" from early childhood on and have a significant influence on young people's ideas about careers. Young people are often guided in their career choices by these stereotypes rather than by their individual strengths and interests. They concentrate on only a few occupations and thus narrow their range of career choices considerably.

In the context of career and study choices, equal opportunity means challenging these gender stereotypes and giving young men and women equal opportunities for realization in the training and labor market. Being able to realize oneself professionally is an essential aspect of personal satisfaction and quality of life.

## Changing professions and gender

Many occupations are associated with a particular gender. However, the historical development of professions - for example in the health care sector - shows that these associations are changeable. Whereas the profession of doctor was reserved for men alone when medical studies were first introduced, the proportion of female students in general medicine is now around 60 percent in Germany. Whether a profession is practiced more often by women or men depends above all on whether men and women are ascribed the necessary characteristics and abilities in the respective historical context.

The distinction between biological sex and social gender makes it clear that certain characteristics or abilities cannot simply be derived from biological sex. Rather, they are the result of social processes of attribution and evaluation. What is considered either "male" or "female" in a culture changes over time.

This socially shared knowledge of how men and women are, how they are supposed to be, and what therefore fits them, forms the basis for the process of "doing gender." This process describes how gender is established and made clear in everyday life, for example through the way one walks, sits, dresses, chooses a sport - or even the choice of a profession or field of study.

## Stereotype-Free School

Young people have diverse interests and potential - far beyond gender stereotypes. With this set of methods from the Initiative Klischeefrei, we want to support you in recognizing gender stereotypes and dynamics that limit young people in their career and study choices and to reflect on them together with the students. The goal is to show young people the entire range of career perspectives and encourage them to follow their individual strengths and interests.

# HELPFUL TIPS CLASSROOMS FREE OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

## Language creates awareness

Use both the feminine and masculine forms of language (if your language has separate feminine and masculine forms) alongside gender-neutral terms to show the full diversity of careers and lifestyles (e.g., teachers, engineers, educators). This creates awareness and encourages your students to imagine careers and lives beyond gender stereotypes.

## Critically reflect on gender stereotypes

Pick up on gender stereotypical ideas and address them. Questions such as "Does this apply to all girls and boys, or to all women and men? Do these statements also apply to you?" help to highlight gender stereotypes and internal differences that exist between "boys" and "girls".

## Strengthen self-confidence

Boost your students' self-confidence by encouraging them to try new things - for example, by choosing an internship.

## Make role models visible

Introduce role models into lessons to show that both men and women have achieved important successes, for example in the field of science and technology. As part of career guidance, it is also a good idea to invite female students and female trainees to present, for example, technical and scientific occupations, and male students and male trainees to present, for example, educational and social occupations.

## Show the diversity of professions

Show the diversity of occupations. Most professions require key skills, such as teamwork and communication skills, as well as analytical thinking and technical understanding.

## Conduct mono-gender group work at times

At times, it is appropriate to conduct separate-gender group work to counteract unwanted gender-based dynamics and role assignments that can occur in mixed-gender groups. The goal, however, is to teach girls and boys together with their individual needs and strengths.

# METHOD OVERVIEW

The method set "STEREOTYPE-FREE SCHOOL" includes three interactive teaching methods for students that can be used in the context of parental work and for internal school development processes on career and study choices free of gender stereotypes. The teaching methods can be used in

vocational preparation lessons, in subject lessons, in substitute lessons or on project days.

The elaborated methods are designed for immediate use. Feel free to expand our suggestions with your own ideas.

Title	Learning Objective	Method	Grade Level	Duration
<b>It's All Just Cliché</b>	<b>Recognizing gender stereotypes and being able to distinguish them from reality.</b>	<b>Thesis barometer</b>	<b>From 5th grade</b>	<b>20-30 minutes</b>
<b>What Do I Do for a Living?</b>	<b>Questioning occupation-related gender stereotypes, broadening the spectrum of occupational choices.</b>	<b>Occupation guessing game</b>	<b>From 5th grade</b>	<b>30-45 minutes</b>
<b>My Role Models and Me</b>	<b>Reflection on professional role models and their influence on one's own career and study choices.</b>	<b>Biography work</b>	<b>From 7th grade</b>	<b>45-90 minutes</b>