

# My choices?



10 mins



**Objective: To look at unconscious bias and how it influences our thinking.**

**Resources:** Stopwatch/timer, 2x working walls or 4x large pieces of paper, a coloured pen per student, Challenging Stereotypes animation to show at the end if you wish.

## Activity

- Do not share the objective until the end of the activity.
- Refer to or create your working agreement - set this out at the beginning to agree behaviour and language expectations (see Teacher Notes).
- Ask the class to divide themselves into two equally-sized groups – keep this pacey.
- Ask each group to write the following headings on their working wall/paper:
  - Boys/men
  - Girls/women\*
- Explain you're going to set a timed task. Remind them they will need to work as a team and make sure that everyone is included.
- Using a stopwatch/timer to keep on track, tell the class that they have one minute to write as many words to describe boys/men as they can. Give a ten second countdown.
- Repeat, giving the groups one minute to write as many words to describe girls/women as they can. Give a ten second countdown.
- Once the two minutes are up, go through the words from both teams noting down any similar words and those written by both teams on a flipchart or board.
- Explain to them that the words they chose show how powerful gender stereotyping, and the language people often use when referring to different genders, can be.
- Ask them why they think you made this such a tightly timed activity. (Tell them it was to demonstrate how we all have a certain level of unconscious bias in us and we are more likely to succumb to these when under pressure e.g. a time constraint).
- Explain what unconscious bias means. The Collins Dictionary says: 'Bias is a tendency to prefer one person or thing to another, and to favour that person or thing.' And 'if feelings or attitudes are unconscious, you are not aware that you have them, but they show in the way that you behave.'
- Discuss their thoughts and feelings. Use this as an assessment of your students' understanding around the issues of gender stereotyping and gaps that you will need to address during future sessions.
- Remind students that if they feel uncomfortable about anything raised in this session they should talk to an adult they trust. (Parents/carers, other school staff or maybe ChildLine who are open 24/7 for everyone up to the age of 19 on chat, text or call.)

\*Be sure to make gender non-conforming students feel part of this, and where necessary adapt this activity to accommodate your cohort's needs. E.g. *BEFORE teaching the lesson, make sure you find time to talk to them about what you'll be covering in this activity and check that they are happy to take part. If not, talk through some different options and see if you can adapt these to work in your class. For example, would they like to add another element or have a chance to educate the class on their interpretations in this or another session?*

## Extension ideas:

- Discussion: Where do gender and other stereotypes come from? How do you feel about this? Why?
- Film: Show the 'Gender stereotypes and unconscious bias' film from The Royal Society to further explore this topic. [youtube.com/watch?v=dVp9Z5k0dEE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVp9Z5k0dEE) (2:59 minutes long). Watch it through before you show it to students and prepare the video so you can stop at certain points to raise discussion about certain issues.