

# Should we teach boys and girls differently?

- For decades the assumption has been that the differences between boys and girls is “learned” not hard-wired in the genes
- Most teachers are ladies and they teach and decorate with a style that appeals to girls
- Far too many boys are being put on ADHD medication
- Problem with boys today – lethargic and not wanting to achieve and excel (hormones, computers, poor school experiences, need male leaders)
- Problem with girls today – overachievers, hyper-connection with peers, obsessions, lack of spiritual input
- Differences are greatest in childhood and not as significant in adults
- Every child is unique – this is not a Black and White exclusive comparison. But just like 2 year olds and 8 year olds are significantly different based on age, boys and girls ARE different based on gender

<b>Hearing</b>	
Verbal skills are centered in right brain	Verbal skills are centered in left brain
Girls can hear more sounds, and hear them louder	The threshold of noise is higher for boys
Pick up on language more quickly	Slower to learn language and use it effectively
Music therapy for premie babies helped significantly	Music therapy did not help at all for boys
Girls should be seated in the back of the room	Boys should be closer to teacher to hear better (Men teachers tend to talk louder, too)
<b>Vision</b>	
Baby girls prefer to watch faces	Baby boys prefer to look at moving mobiles
P-cells in retina are wired to cones and focus on texture and color	M-cells in retina wired to rods and focus on motion
When coloring, girls prefer red, orange, green, beige	Boys prefer black, gray, silver, blue
Girls draw nouns – people, houses, etc using 12 warm colors	Boys draw verbs – action, objects, etc using 6 cold colors
Girls give navigation directions using landmarks and descriptions	Boys use distances and direction
<b>Play and Toys</b>	
Girls like dolls, and social interaction	Boys prefer trucks, guns, and building blocks
Girls like nurturing and role playing and make-believe	Boys like rough and tumble play with no communication, or just shouting
Girls can interpret facial expressions on others better	Boys have better spatial memory and motor coordination
<b>Emotion and Communication</b>	
Girls brains develop in their teen years – area where emotion is felt is close to area where talking occurs	The emotion and talking parts of brain are far removed from each other in young children and in all boys
<b>Risk-Taking</b>	
Aversive to risk	Often attempt risky (stupid) things – especially when other boys are around
Girls underestimate their ability	Boys overestimate their ability
Girls need encouragement to take healthy risks (tough courses, sports, etc)	Boys need to be in active planned adult-supervised risky activities
Girls quickly adopt “learned helplessness”	Boys need reality checks

<b>Aggression</b>	
Girls fight with words and subtle offenses – leading to long lasting “war”	Boys fight physically, resolve it, and end up better friends
Teachers need to tune in to the real tensions below surface of girl wars	Boys need rough and tumble play to learn “rules of the game”
Girls prefer stories without violence – warm, fuzzy	Boys prefer stories with some violence (and computer games)
Physical bullying is not approved by peers	Physical bullying may raise a boy’s standing with peers
Girls can put themselves in another’s shoes and have empathy (Ask, “How would you FEEL is someone treated you this way?”)	Boys have a harder time imagining what someone else feels (Ask, “What would you DO if someone did this to you?”)
<b>Friendships</b>	
Girls focus on face-to-face conversation and being together	Boys friendships focus on shared game, activity (shoulder-to-shoulder)
Girls “self-disclose” (tell secrets) with best friends	Boys don’t (can be together for hours and only joke,make noises, shout)
Under stress, girls seek out support of their friends	Under stress, boys want to be left alone
Girls tend to make friends from her “equals”	Boys view hierarchy as a means to organize and build camaraderie
<b>Relationship with Teachers</b>	
Girls will ask for help when stuck	Boys don’t want to ask for help – even as a last resort They would rather resort to goofing off and horsing around
Girls can be harmed by a negative assessment by teacher	Boys instead are motivated by “in your face” reality check
Girls want to please the teacher, even if it means doing uninteresting HW	Boys are not motivated to please – they want to see the value of it
Girls view teachers as allies, and possibly even a friend	Boys view friendship with the teacher as “geekiness”
Girls perform better with supportive, encouraging teacher	Boys benefit from confrontational, assertive teacher
<b>School Tasks</b>	
Girls tend to do worse under stress of time constraints (tests, etc) (suggestion: help girls relax, remove time limits, lower lights and sounds)	Boys actually perform better and are energized by time constraints Also, boys love fair competition
Girls learn better from stories	Boys prefer hands on, high-interest, applicability to real life
Girls prefer reading fiction – short stories and novels	Boys choose nonfiction – real adventures, war, male heroes

## Recommendations

1. Make yourself available to girls who need help, but be proactive in arranging for boys to get help when needed
2. Treat the girls and boys differently – different assignments, different testing conditions, different reading
3. Encourage boys to start kindergarten later – age 6 (better than repeating a grade later)
4. Do not encourage ADHD medication – find alternative ways to teach those boys (competition, hands-on, active)
5. Encourage girls when needed, and confront boys (privately) when needed
6. Recognize and appreciate differences between boys and girls without expecting them to be the same, or getting frustrated with boys
7. Do some decorating with sports, nature, science, activity themes

(sources: Dr. Leonard Sax – *Boys Adrift*, *Girls on the Edge*, and *Why Gender Matters*)

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