



International Women's Day

CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES ONLINE SESSION

Facilitator Guide





International Women's Day

WELCOME!

In honor of International Women's Day 2025, Lean In Girls is offering one of our most popular sessions—Challenge Stereotypes—in a new online format, making it even more accessible for facilitators and girls around the globe.


By running this one-hour online session, you will help girls overcome limiting stereotypes and embrace their leadership superpowers.

Challenge Stereotypes is part of the curriculum offered by the [Lean In Girls](#) program, which equips girls and teens ages 11–15 who identify with the girlhood experience to be self-assured, resilient, and inclusive everyday leaders.

In the guide that follows, we'll provide everything you need to run the session, including materials and a detailed script that makes facilitation simple and stress-free.

GETTING STARTED IS AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3:

1. Pick a date and time to run your session and [register your session](#).

 Registering your session allows our team to follow along on your journey and provide customized support as needed.

2. Choose a videoconferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, or WhatsApp).
3. Get the word out. We recommend 6–15 girls per session. For support in getting the word out, see our [Lean In Girls promotional flyer](#).

Continue reading for an overview of the session, a step-by-step guide on how to prepare, and a full script to help you facilitate.

Interested in exploring the full Lean In Girls curriculum? Learn more at [LeanInGirls.org](#).

OVERVIEW

Facilitators should read all of the content below to plan and prepare for the session. It provides you with an overview of the session and is not designed to be shared with the girls.

SESSION GOALS

Teens will learn to recognize limiting stereotypes about girls and how to challenge them.

KEY TAKEAWAYS OF THE SESSION

- Stereotypes are biased assumptions about what girls are like (or should be like).
- Girls can experience different stereotypes depending on their unique mix of identities.
- We can't make stereotypes go away—but we can reduce their power by countering them with accurate information.

WHY THIS SESSION MATTERS

Gendered stereotypes can harm girls' confidence and limit their leadership opportunities. Although we can't eliminate those stereotypes (at least not right away), we can reduce the power they have. Research shows that teaching people to recognize and think critically about stereotypes can change attitudes about gender roles, improve girls' self-esteem, help girls see themselves as leaders, and boost their resilience to bias and barriers.

NOTE ON THE ONLINE VERSION OF THE SESSION

This session has been specifically designed for girls to experience virtually. There is also an in-person version of the session that covers the same material. You can download the in-person version—and get access to the full Lean In Girls curriculum—on our [website](#). Note that the Challenge Stereotypes session is Part 2, Session 1.

SESSION AT A GLANCE

Welcome and Setting Group Norms	10 min
Ignite (“Stand Up to Stereotypes”): The facilitator reads a list of traits, and teens use an emoji to react when they hear a trait that supposedly describes girls.	10 min
Unpacking Stereotypes: The facilitator leads a discussion on key concepts related to stereotypes.	15 min
Saying “No!” to Stereotypes: Teens practice pushing back against both negative and “positive” stereotypes.	20 min
Closing and One Action: Teens make a plan for putting what they’ve learned into practice.	5 min

SETUP INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

In the week before the session:

Get ready to facilitate:

- Spend time understanding what functionality your video conferencing software offers—for example, emojis, chat, and breakout rooms.
 - Familiarize yourself with the session materials and instructions.
 - Write or type in your responses to the **FACILITATOR EXAMPLE** prompts in the session instructions so you're prepared to share examples with the group as needed.
 - Write or type in your planned start and end times for each part of the session to help you keep track of time.
 - Throughout the session, we will direct you to paste instructions into the chat. While this is optional, we recommend using the chat in this way because it helps make the session more accessible to girls who may be hard of hearing or neurodiverse.
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Make sure you have the technology you'll need:

- A computer (laptop or desktop) or device such as a tablet
- A stable internet connection
- Videoconferencing software such as Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, or WhatsApp with the ability to screen-share a PDF for the teens to view during the session

At least 30 minutes before the session start time:

Set up your computer or device:

- Open up these facilitator instructions to refer to during the session—or you can print them out if you prefer.

CONTINUE OVERVIEW ON THE NEXT PAGE 

SETUP INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS (CONTINUED)

Set up your computer or device:

- **Launch** the software.
 - **Set your display name** if not already set to your preferred name. In most software, you can do this by going to “settings” (the gear icon).
 - **Test your audio and video.** In most software, you can do this by going to “settings” (the gear icon).
 - **Prepare session materials.** Open up the [PDF with the session norms, stereotype images, and One Action](#).
 - **Test the screen-share function** in your videoconferencing software.
 - **Practice typing into the chat and using emojis** if your chosen software has a chat/emoji function.
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If running sessions of 15 girls or more:

- If you'd like to run a session with more than 15 girls, we recommend a ratio of one facilitator per 15 girls (e.g., if you have 30 girls attending, you should plan to have two facilitators). We also suggest utilizing breakout rooms for the “Saying ‘No!’ to Stereotypes” activity. Each breakout room should have 6–15 girls per one facilitator.

SESSION GUIDE

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS TO USE DURING THE SESSION

Step 1: Welcome And Setting Group Norms

Estimated time: 20 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

1. Welcome teens to the program and invite them to settle in:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

PASTE IN CHAT

Hi everyone. Welcome! We're glad you're here. Go ahead and settle in, turn on your camera, and then share an emoji in the chat to let us know how your day is going. We're going to sit tight while we wait for everyone to join and we'll get started in about three minutes.

While we're waiting, you should grab a pen and paper—or you can open up an app—to make a note of anything you want to take away from the session.

Share your screen with the “Welcome” page of the [PDF](#).

2. After waiting four minutes, welcome the girls:

Stop sharing your screen.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Hi everyone! A very warm welcome to our session today! I want to thank you all so much for being here. My name is [your name] and I'm from [place]. I'm excited to lead this session from Lean In Girls because [why you want to lead the session].

3. Invite teens to introduce themselves:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Now, I have a few questions for you.

PASTE IN CHAT

We'd like to know ...

- *What's your name?*
- *Where do you live?*

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: CHOOSE ONE AND PASTE IN CHAT

- *What advice would you give to your 10-year-old self?*
- *What is your favorite thing to do on the weekend?*
- *If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?*
- *What is one hobby you wish you had more time for?*
- *What is a trend you have loved or hated recently?*
- *Describe your life in six words.*

You can take a few minutes to think of your answer to that last question

In groups of eight or fewer, ask girls to answer the questions out loud.

You're welcome to call out your answer or raise your hand.

In groups of nine or more, ask girls to answer in the chat and then ask if any girls would like to share out loud. *I'd like you to answer in the chat. (On many platforms, you can find the chat by clicking the speech bubble in the menu options.)*

If girls have trouble finding the chat or emojis, share instructions for how they can use the chat and emoji features on your videoconferencing platform. If helpful, display the "Technology tips" page of the session [PDF](#). Then stop sharing again.

FACILITATOR EXAMPLE**PASTE IN CHAT**

Your answer to the icebreaker question:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Thank you all for introducing yourselves and sharing these fascinating answers. If possible, comment on a theme you see in the girls' fun facts.

If you're having trouble with any of the technology, write your issue in the chat and I will try to help you.

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

4. Summarize the goals and format of the program and share the focus of the session:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Now I'll talk about what we're doing here today. The Lean In Girls program is about exploring who you are as a leader and helping you make a difference in the ways that matter to you. Today we're going to focus on stereotypes about girls and practice pushing back on those stereotypes together.

5. Let teens know that you're not an expert in everything you're going to talk about and that you're here to learn with and from them:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

You should also know that I'm here to guide you through this session, but I'm not an expert on everything we will talk about. I'm here to learn with you and from you. If you have a question I don't know the answer to, we'll try to figure it out together. And if you disagree with something I say, please speak up! Hearing what you think is really important to me.

6. Share group norms for speaking up and listening in today's session:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

I'm going to share some norms for how we'll interact today as a group.

Share your screen with the "Group norms" page of the [PDF](#).

- 1. Turn on your camera: I'd love to invite everyone to turn on their camera. This helps us connect with each other and creates a more engaging and interactive experience.*
- 2. Mute yourself when you're not speaking: This helps us avoid having background noise interrupt the conversation.*
- 3. Speak up if you can: Know that you're always welcome to contribute. Feel free to simply unmute yourself and speak up, or you can raise your hand or write your thoughts in the chat.*
- 4. Listen respectfully: Listen to others when they speak, and don't interrupt when someone is talking.*
- 5. Be present: We'd like you to set aside distractions and really engage and be present during this session.*

Does anyone have any questions about these norms?

Step 2: Ignite: Stand Up To Stereotypes

Estimated time: 10 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

Goals: Teens practice recognizing stereotypes and begin to understand that stereotypes are limiting assumptions.

At a glance: You read a list of sentences. Teens react with an emoji or raise their hand when they hear a sentence that sounds like a stereotype (an overly simplified belief about a group or category).

1. Introduce the definition of stereotypes and give the group directions for the “Stand Up to Stereotypes” activity:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

We’re going to start by seeing if we can recognize stereotypes when we encounter them. This is important, because stereotypes are one of the major barriers to girls being seen, and seeing themselves, as leaders.

I’m going to share a quick definition with you.

Share your screen with the “What are stereotypes” page of the [PDF](#).

Stereotypes are overly simplified beliefs about an entire group—for example, what they’re good or bad at, what they should or shouldn’t do, or what they are or aren’t interested in. Stereotypes suggest that everyone in a group is alike, when, in reality, every individual has unique interests and talents.

And stereotypes are very pervasive. We see and hear gender stereotypes all the time—in movies, on social media, from other people in our lives.

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE ►

Here are some examples of stereotypes so you know what they look like in practice:

- 1. Girls are good at babysitting.*
- 2. Boys are bad at cleaning up.*
- 3. Girls should wear dresses.*
- 4. Boys should be tough.*

2. Share that gender stereotypes and norms can vary across communities and can change over time:

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Some gender stereotypes relate to all girls. Other stereotypes are about girls of specific cultural backgrounds or identities. And it's possible that some of the stereotypes about girls we talk about in this session won't match your experience. That's normal! It's also important to know that stereotypes change over time.*

I'll share one example of this.

EXAMPLE OPTION 1

Share screen with [PDF](#) page "Example option 1" (black and white photo of artists).

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

EXAMPLE OPTION 2

Share screen with [PDF](#) page “Example option 2” (image of men in the color pink).

In the U.S. and Europe before 1900, the color pink was often used for men’s and boys’ clothes. It could signify high social status, as you can see from these paintings. But in the mid-twentieth century, pink became strongly associated with girls in many parts of the world.

In both cases, the color pink was given a specific stereotyped meaning, but the stereotype changed over time.

Stop sharing screen.

3. Describe the activity:**SAMPLE SCRIPT**

Now we’ll do an activity where I’ll read a list of short sentences. When you hear a sentence that sounds like a stereotype—an overly simplified belief about girls—I want you to react with an emoji or raise your hand.

Let’s walk through an example together.

For example, if I said, “All girls like wearing dresses” or “All girls should wear dresses,” that’s a stereotype, so you would react with an emoji or raise your hand, because a lot of people assume all girls like wearing dresses (although plenty of girls don’t).

I also want to point out that if some of these stereotypes do fit you, that is totally fine! It’s great to wear dresses. It’s just not great when people expect you to fit into their stereotypes about you.

Before we start, does anyone have any questions?

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

4. Read the stereotypes about girls below, moving through the list quickly. If you're short on time, you can omit some of the prompts:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

I'm going to read the first example and also paste it in the chat, and I want you to raise your hand if the sentence is a stereotype.

Read aloud and **PASTE IN CHAT** one by one, giving the girls a few seconds to respond to each:

- *All girls like the color pink.*
- *My sister likes the color pink.*
- *My aunt is gossipy.*
- *All girls are gossipy.*
- *Girls should be helpful.*
- *Girls aren't good at sports.*
- *My mom loves shopping.*
- *Girls are bad at math.*

If teens get it wrong, explain why. *If the sentence is a generalization about what a whole group of people are like or should be like, it's a stereotype. But if it's a specific statement about one person, it's not a stereotype.*

5. Ask the group to share additional examples of stereotypes:

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- *Has anyone heard any of these stereotypes before? How did you feel when you heard them?*
- *Does anyone want to share another example of a stereotype about girls?*

If no one answers, the facilitator can give a sample response:

Girls are not interested in science or math.

6. Wrap up the activity:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

You all did so well at recognizing stereotypes! Now we're going to do an activity where you reflect on stereotypes you may have heard in your own lives.

Step 3: Unpacking Stereotypes

Estimated time: 15 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

Goals: Teens understand that stereotypes are harmful, even when they sound positive on the surface, and can affect how girls are seen as leaders.

At a glance: You explain key concepts related to stereotypes, inviting teens to reflect and add their perspectives through discussion questions.

1. Share that stereotypes are harmful even when they sound positive on the surface:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Some of the stereotypes we just looked at are obviously negative, like when people assume girls are bad at math. But other stereotypes sound like compliments—for example, when people assume girls should be helpful. To be clear, that's a good thing to be! But there's a harmful message in the stereotype, which is that girls should always be helpful, or be more helpful than boys are. That can mean girls can get called "selfish" or "stubborn" when they say no or look out for themselves.

The next activity focuses on some of the most common stereotypes about girls that sound positive.

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE ►

2. Read from a list of “positive” stereotypes and invite teens to react with an emoji or raise their hand if they’ve ever been told they should fit that stereotype:

SAMPLE SCRIPT *I’m going to read a list of stereotypes about girls that sound positive, and I’d like you all to react with an emoji or raise your hands if you’ve ever heard any of these statements:*

PASTE IN CHAT *You should be good at cleaning up.*

- *When you heard this, how did it make you feel?*
 - *As I said before, there’s nothing wrong with being good at cleaning. The problem is that girls are often told they should be good at cleaning and boys rarely hear this. Why do you think this statement could be harmful if girls hear it a lot, or more often than boys?*
 - *If no one answers, the facilitator can give a sample response: **If girls are always told they should be good at cleaning, and boys aren’t, it can mean that girls end up taking on more than their fair share of cleaning responsibilities. And you can imagine how this could happen with cooking or other chores or babysitting.***
 - *If girls share that boys in their lives hear this too, celebrate that!*

PASTE IN CHAT *You should be helpful.*

- *When you heard this, how did it make you feel?*
- *Why do you think this could be harmful if girls hear it a lot?*

PASTE IN CHAT *You should be sweet.*

- *When you heard this, how did it make you feel?*
- *Why do you think this could be harmful if girls hear it a lot?*

PASTE IN CHAT *You should be quiet.*

- *When you heard this, how did it make you feel?*
- *Why do you think this could be harmful if girls hear it a lot?*

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

PASTE IN CHAT *You should be good at babysitting.*

- *When you heard this, how did it make you feel?*
- *Why do you think this could be harmful if girls hear it a lot?*

Thank you all for your responses—that was really interesting to learn that you’re hearing these stereotypes.

3. Share how stereotypes affect the way girls are seen as leaders:

SAMPLE SCRIPT *A big part of the reason we’re talking about stereotypes today is because stereotypes often make it harder for people to see girls as leaders.*

Share your screen with the [PDF](#) page “Stereotypes and girls’ leadership”.

When girls lead by taking charge, that contradicts the stereotype that girls are supposed to be quiet and obedient—so they can get bad reactions, like people calling them “mean” or “bossy.”

On the other hand, when girls lead by being kind and cooperative, that may not be seen as “real” leadership, because leaders are stereotyped as being forceful and in charge.

Stop sharing screen.

Obviously, none of these stereotypes are true, and they can be really damaging, so next we’re going to talk about ways you can practice pushing back against them.

Step 4: Saying “No!” To Stereotypes

Estimated time: 20 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

Goals: Teens practice pushing back against stereotypes about girls.

At a glance: Teens listen as you read examples of stereotypes. They use emoji reactions or raise their hand to indicate stereotypes they have experienced and call out ways that stereotype is not true for them.

Note: If you have more than 15 girls and a co-facilitator, use breakout rooms for this activity.

1. Introduce the activity:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Unfortunately, stereotypes are pretty hard to change, but we can push back against them, and that takes away some of their power over us. So we're going to practice that in our next activity.

Here's what we're going to do. First, I will read out a stereotype. For example, I might read out, "I've been treated like I'm overly emotional." If that's true for you, react with an emoji or raise your hand. Then I'll ask, "Are you overly emotional?" Then we'll go around to the people who raised their hand and have volunteers share why it's not true for them. For example, you could say something like, "I'm not overly emotional, I am passionate about things that matter."

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE ►

2. The facilitator will read aloud the stereotype prompts below, one at a time. After each prompt, have teens react with an emoji or raise their hand if the prompt applies to them, and ask for volunteers to share how they would challenge the stereotype. After each teen speaks, you should thank them for sharing.

 Feel free to omit prompts if you're short on time.

1. *I've been treated like I'm too dramatic or overly emotional.*
2. *I've been treated like I'm too loud or too opinionated.*
3. *I've been treated like I'm helpless or incapable of doing something.*
4. *I've been treated like I'm illogical or unintelligent.*
5. *I've been treated like I'm too bossy or demanding.*
6. *I've been treated like I'm weak.*

Example responses for facilitators (if girls don't know how to respond):

1. *Dramatic or overly emotional: "I'm not too emotional, I am passionate about things that matter."*
2. *Too loud or too opinionated: "I'm not opinionated, I am standing up for my values."*
3. *Helpless or incapable of doing something: "I'm not incapable! Just because I do things differently or on my own timeline doesn't make me helpless or incapable."*
4. *Illogical or unintelligent: "I'm not unintelligent—I have perspective and insights that add value."*
5. *Too bossy or demanding: "I'm not demanding, I'm a leader with a vision."*
6. *Weak: "I'm not weak, I'm resilient and capable."*

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

3. Wrap up the activity by reflecting on how teens pushed back against limiting stereotypes:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

I love seeing the ways you're pushing back on the stereotypes that get in girls' way when they set out to lead. I'd like to hear more from all of you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Pro tip: If short on time, pick questions you think will resonate best with your group

- *Would any of you be willing to share a time when someone stereotyped you, for example, called you too bossy or treated you like you were irrational?*
 - *How did that make you feel?*
 - *And how did you respond at the time?*
 - *Would anyone else like to share?*

Ask a few girls to share—as many as possible in the time available.

If you have a small group and still have extra time, the facilitator can share times when they were stereotyped as a teenager.

FACILITATOR EXAMPLE

A time when you were stereotyped as a teenager, how you felt, and how you responded: _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *How did you feel just now, in this session, when you were pushing back against stereotypes?*
- *Would anyone else like to share?*

Ask a few girls to share—as many as possible in the time available.

4. Wrap up the activity:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Thank you so much—it was really powerful to hear you all challenging stereotypes and standing up for your authentic selves! Now we're going to do one final activity to end the session.

Closing And One Action

Estimated time: 5 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

Goals: Teens think of a way to apply the session content to their day-to-day lives.

At a glance: Teens choose a way to practice pushing back against stereotypes.

1. Share the page of the [PDF](#) with the “One Action”. Explain the One Action routine and ask teens to share one way they can practice pushing back against stereotypes:

SAMPLE SCRIPT

We'll end this session by choosing a One Action—a way to put what we've learned into practice. I want everyone to think of one thing they can do to keep pushing back against stereotypes and type it into the chat.

Your action could be sharing what you learned today with a friend or family member, doing something that people assume girls don't like or aren't good at, or just noticing stereotypes you see on social media or in movies and TV shows. For example, I'm planning to ...

FACILITATOR EXAMPLE

One way you're planning to push back against stereotypes:

I'll give you a minute to write down your One Action with your pen and paper or in your notes app.

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE ►

2. Ask a few teens to share their One Action out loud with the group:

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Now, could I have a few volunteers to share their planned One Action with the group? Feel free to come off mute or share in the chat and tell us how you plan to keep pushing back against stereotypes.*

3. Close by thanking the group for a great session:

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Thank you again for participating in today's session! It was a pleasure to meet you all—and it was amazing to hear you all challenging stereotypes about what girls should and shouldn't be like. I hope what we talked about is helpful to you as you navigate challenges and grow as a leader. Goodbye everyone!*