

# Chapter 2: Gender-focused icebreaker

Gender 101 training materials

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Jhpiego is a Johns Hopkins University affiliate.

Published by:  
Jhpiego Corporation  
Brown's Wharf  
1615 Thames Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21231-3492, USA  
[www.jhpiego.org](http://www.jhpiego.org)

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# Chapter 2: Gender-focused icebreaker

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## Learning objectives

To allow participants to get to know one another by sharing their personal stories

## Time needed

30 minutes

## Materials needed

- One copy of the [Gender Ice-Breaker Jamboard template](#)

**Facilitator note:** This exercise may be used as an abbreviated version of the session “Act Like a Man, Act Like a Woman” when time is limited. However, it does not include discussion on the links between gender roles and health.

## Steps

### Introduction (5 minutes)

Start by explaining that the activity is intended to help create a friendly and trusting atmosphere for the workshop through sharing their personal stories. Point out that this activity is also useful for initiating personal reflection on gender and its influence in our lives.

### Getting to know one another (20 minutes)

1. Technology Action: At any point after participants arrive, you may begin to prepare breakout rooms:
  - Groups of 2 (randomly distributed participants)
  - Check “Breakout rooms automatically close after”
    - 4 minutes
  - Check “Notify me when time is up”
  - Countdown after closing breakout room: 30 seconds
2. Explain that, in just a minute, participants will take turns in paired breakout rooms introducing themselves and answering a question. Explain that each person will have 2 minutes to introduce themselves (e.g., their name, where they are from, and the program/project they work on) and to answer the following question:
  - When did you first become aware that there are certain things you are allowed and not allowed to do as a woman/man?

**Facilitator Note:** If workshop participants already have a good level of gender awareness and understanding, use the following question instead: “Describe some things you do in your personal life to step outside of traditional gender roles.”

3. Technology Action: Post the following in the Zoom chat for participants to reference in their breakout rooms:
  - When did you first become aware that there are certain things you are allowed and not allowed to do as a woman/man?

4. Explain that after 2 minutes you will send a broadcast message instructing participants to stop and switch so the person who was speaking becomes the listener.
  - Remind participants that the broadcast message will show up in a small box in the top center of their Zoom screen. If they miss the broadcast message, they can also check the countdown timer that will be at the top right-hand corner of their screen.
5. Ask participants if they have any questions and clarify any misunderstandings. (Spend no more than 5 minutes on steps 1 to 4).
6. **Technology Action: Open the breakout rooms.**
7. **Technology Action: After 2 minutes have passed, send a broadcast message reminding participants to switch so the person who is speaking becomes the listener.**
8. **Technology Action: After 4 minutes, close the breakout rooms.**
9. Ask each person to introduce her/his partner and to relate the stories or issues that she/he talked about. Allow no more than 2 minutes per pair.
10. On a blank Jamboard, add two slides: one with “Male” at the top and one with “Female”. As participants share, list the different gender roles, norms, expectations, or constraints participants share as being male or female, respectively.
11. **Technology Action: Screen share the Jamboard on which you’ve been taking notes.**
12. At the end of the introductions, briefly explain that these gender roles, norms, expectations, and constraints are boxes that society imposes on us due to gender. We can call them the “man box” and “woman box.” You may refer to this throughout the training for quick reference to gender roles, norms, expectations, and constraints.

**Facilitator note:** It is important to ask each participant for permission to share their story with the group.

### **Optional Adaptation**

If all of your participants will be joining from their homes, take advantage of their virtual environments and adjust the prompt. Ask each participant to find a physical object that they believe represents either:

- What is acceptable to do/be as a man or woman in their culture.
- A time when they stepped out of their traditional gender role.

Then, while in small groups, have each participant share that objective with their partner. (Note that if someone has no object nearby to share, they may think of an object and then describe it to their partner).

Additional considerations:

- This exercise may require that each participant have approximately 1 additional minute to share their object (bringing the total time in breakout rooms to 6 minutes).
- Consider emailing participants prior to the live session and asking them to come ready with their object in order to save time. Otherwise, give no more than 2 minutes for participants to find their object and bring it to their work area.

### Closing (5 minutes)

End the activity by thanking everyone for their openness and for sharing their stories. State that the personal experiences shared help to illustrate the profound influence of gender norms in shaping our social identities.

### Source

- Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), and International Center for Research in Women
- (ICRW). 2007. *ISOFI Toolkit: Tools for Learning and Action on gender and sexuality*. PLA Exercise 3. Atlanta,
- GA: CARE and ICRW. Copyright © 2007 Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc. (CARE) and International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). Used by permission.