



Dress-ups that celebrate diversity

Children can engage in rich dramatic play using only their imagination, but we know the dress-up corner is a hit for a reason! When they have access to a diverse range of costumes and accessories, they can embody characters, create scenarios, and develop narratives that explore different identities and ways of being in their play.

Could your dress-ups unintentionally reinforce stereotypes related to culture, disability, or gender?

Follow these five simple steps to find out and explore ways to diversify dramatic play at your service.

>>> Dive deeper:
Community Early Learning Australia (2024), *The ethics of dress-up: Balancing parental authority and child autonomy*. Hope (2016), *Hair straighteners in the home corner*. State Government of Victoria (2023), *Sociodramatic play (interacting with others)*.



Step 1
Divide your dress-ups into those with human and non-human characteristics.

Step 2
Split those with non-human characteristics into themes (animals, mythical creatures, vehicles etc.)

Step 3
Group your dress-ups that have human characteristics by:

- Family and community life
- Fixed themes with specific roles
- Children's literature and pop culture
- Unfamiliar people and places
- Traditional/multicultural perspectives.

Step 4
For each of the groups from steps 2 and 3, reflect on:

- Cultural perspectives – thinking about First Nations Australians as well as cultural and linguistic diversity
- Adaptive costumes and accessories – such as rear access for children to dress while seated, and accessibility panels accommodating mobility or medical equipment
- Gender diversity – allowing for exploration of different identities, including those that may differ from societal binary stereotypes or assigned genders.

Step 5
Review your results!

- How did your costume department shape up?
- Are there any gaps?

Final reflection

- Do the dress-ups in your collection acknowledge the diversity of children and families in your community?
- Do any items represent hurtful or negative stereotypes?
- How might you shift the narrative when children's play is reinforcing the societal stereotypes that perpetuate inequality?

Need extra support?
Contact your Inclusion Professional to discuss specific examples of how these changes can be made in your service.

TAKE ACTION

Is it time to diversify your dress-ups? What could your first step be? Write it in the box now!