

# Are Preschoolers Still Gender-Neutral?

## Moms Pick Favorite Preschool Themes

by Nancy Zwiers, CEO of Funosophy, Inc.

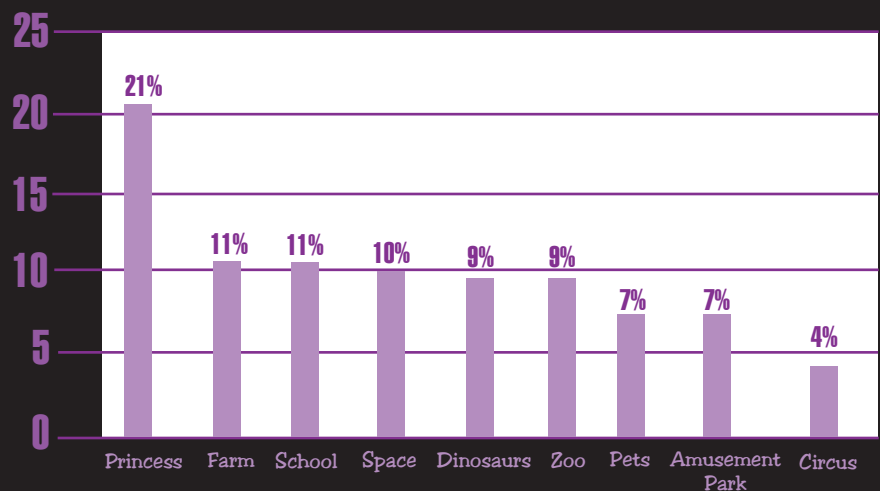
Designers and marketers of preschool products often wonder when moms stop buying products with gender-neutral themes and begin seeking out items that are more gender specific. We know that kids ages 5 and older are already interested in more gender-specific product themes, but what about preschoolers? Are they still gender neutral?

A recent survey conducted by toy marketing firm Funosophy, Inc., asked 200 moms of preschoolers ages 3–5 which themes they would most like to see on products in the major toy categories. The results provide some interesting insight for preschool product designers.

### Gender-Neutral vs. Gender-Specific

Of the preschool themes tested, the most popular theme is a gender-specific theme—princess. The No. 2 and No. 3 spots—farm and school—are gender neutral, but two more gender-specific themes—space and dinosaurs—round out the top five. The bottom line is that both gender-specific and gender-neutral themes are popular with today’s preschoolers.

Average Percentage of Moms Who Would Like to See This Theme on One or More of the Toy Categories Tested



## Category-Specific Theme Choices

### Games and Puzzles

The princess theme captures the No. 1 spot in the games and puzzles category, but the gender-neutral school theme manages to squeeze in second.

### Toy Vehicles

Princess power holds steady even in the vehicles category. The gender-neutral farm theme managed the No. 2 spot.

### Building and Construction Toys

Surprisingly, two gender-neutral themes—amusement park and farm—top the list for the building and construction category. The gender-specific theme of space also put up a strong showing among moms of boys.

### Electronic Learning Aids

Of all the themes tested, moms of boys and girls both selected a gender-neutral theme—school—as the one they would like to see on an electronic learning aid. ELAs is the only toy category where moms of girls chose a theme other than princess as the one they’d most like to see featured on a product.

### Arts and Crafts

More moms wanted to see a princess theme on arts and crafts activity items than any other theme included in the test. Two gender-neutral themes—school and farm—ranked a distant second and third for this category.

### Plush Toys

Two gender-neutral themes rose to the top in the plush category—zoo and pet. The gender-specific themes princess and dinosaur were not far behind, though.

### Figures and Accessories

Two gender-specific themes—princess and dinosaurs—ranked most popular for the figures and accessories category.

### Roleplay

Not surprisingly, gender-specific themes were most popular for roleplay toys, with the girl-specific princess theme leading the way and the traditionally boy-focused space theme ranking second.

## In Summary

Preschoolers have not yet outgrown gender-neutral themes, although they fit with some categories better than others. The genders seem to agree on the relative popularity of the school and farm themes, while the amusement park and circus themes may be a thing of the past. The princess craze has definitely reached the preschool set, with moms of girls ranking this theme tops in nearly every category. Finally, dinosaurs and space themes are resonating strongest with moms of boys.

Nancy Zwiers is CEO of kids’ marketing firm Funosophy, Inc. This survey was conducted by Funosophy and its research partner, KidzEyes, among a nationally representative sample of 200 moms of 3–5-year-old boys and girls.