Use Neutral words for “man” and “woman” in job titles and descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chairman</td>
<td>chair, chairperson, director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policemen</td>
<td>police officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fireman</td>
<td>fire fighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sales girl</td>
<td>sales clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lady lawyer</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding Fathers</td>
<td>Founders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mailmen</td>
<td>mailperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>businessman</td>
<td>business person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressman, congresswoman</td>
<td>congressional representative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base communication on relevant qualities, not on gender. Avoid sexual stereotyping.

Example: She’s a good basketball player. She shoots like a man.
Recommended: She’s a good basketball player. She shoots well.

Example: A brilliant female researcher.
Recommended: A brilliant researcher.

“Because language plays a central role in the way human beings think and behave, we need to promote language that opens rather than closes possibilities for women and men.”

National Council of Teachers of English “Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications” (Revised 1985). This is Available from NCTE, 111 Kenyon Rd, Urbana, IL 61801. Single copies free upon request.

Other Suggested Readings


Henley, Nancy M., “Molehill or Mountain? What We Know and Don’t Know About Sex Bias in Language,” in Mary Crawford and Margaret Gentry, Eds., Gender and Thought: Psychological Perspectives (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989), 59-78.


This Pamphlet has been adapted and reprinted from Guide to Bias-Free Communications, Office of University Publications, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2nd Printing, August 1992.
Language is a powerful tool with which we express our ideas and ourselves. It is therefore important to be aware of the implications of the words we use. People in the university community and elsewhere are increasingly aware of the need to speak and write in ways that do not offend, demean, or exclude others on the basis of gender.

Changing our language, however, does not come easily or automatically. Familiar ways of writing and speaking are often more comfortable. Substitute phrases do not always spring quickly to mind. This guide is meant to help you find a more encompassing word or phrase when you need it and to assist you in being more attuned to language that, whether intended or not, may offend others.

We hope the following suggestions prompt more thoughtful use of language in classrooms and laboratories, in papers and publications, in prayers and presentations, in casual conversations—that is, wherever words count.

**Include all people in general references by replacing gender-biased terms with gender-neutral ones.**

**Example**
man/men; mankind

**Recommended**
people, humanity, human(s), person(s) human being(s), individual(s), humankind

manpower

**Recommended**
labor, workforce, human resources

man-made

**Recommended**
manufactured, synthetic, artificial

laymen's terms

**Recommended**
ordinary terms

spokesman

**Recommended**
representative, spokesperson

the common man

**Recommended**
the average person, ordinary people

best man for the job

**Recommended**
best person for the job

cavemen

**Recommended**
cave dwellers, prehistoric people

freshmen

**Recommended**
first-year students

Avoid gender-biased pronouns by:

a.) dropping pronouns that signify gender.

**Example:** Each student should hand in his term paper.

**Recommended:** Each student should hand in a term paper.

b.) changing plural construction.

**Example:** Each student should turn in his term paper. A nurse cares for her patients.

**Recommended:** Students should turn in their term papers. Nurses care for their patients.

c.) replacing masculine or feminine pronouns with “one” or “you.”

**Example:** Each student should hand in his term paper.

**Recommended:** You should turn in your term paper.

d.) If you cannot come up with an alternate construction, use he/she, her or she, his or her.

**Example:** Each student can select his paper topic.

**Recommended:** Each student can select his or her paper topic.

Use parallelism to refer to both genders equally.

**Example:** Danny Jones, a strong athlete, and Lois Smith, an attractive young runner.

**Recommended:** Jones, a strong basketball player, and Smith, a powerful runner.

**Example:** There are 9 men and 8 girls in my class.

**Recommended:** There are 9 men and 8 women in my class.

**Example:** We studied Kant, Hume, Freud, and Simone de Beauvoir.

**Recommended:** We studied Kant, Hume, Freud, and de Beauvoir.

**Example:** The men’s and ladies’ basketball team.

**Recommended:** The men’s and women’s basketball team.

**Example:** Professor Clausen and Erica Thomas were recently promoted.

**Recommended:** Professor Clausen and Professor Thomas were recently promoted.

Communicate to everyone by including both male and female reference points. Don’t presume marital or family relationships.

**Examples:** Faculty and their wives, you and your spouse, boyfriends/girlfriends, Dear Sir

**Recommended:** Faculty and guests, you and your guest (friend, partner), Dear Colleague, Greetings

If a direct quotation (derived from research or an interview) offends or inappropriately excludes women or men and is not essential to your document, consider eliminating, paraphrasing, or replacing the quotation.