

Gender-sensitive Communication

Do not use gender-biased nouns to refer to groups of people

Gendered nouns and adjectives used to denote generic experiences encourage us to view the world as mainly having relevance to men. The word 'manmade' equates the word 'man' with 'human'. The term 'postman' suggests all postal workers are men. In a gender-equal society it is important to use language that recognises that these posts can be held by women or men.

Gendered nouns and adjectives should be avoided and replaced with gender-neutral terms.

Examples

Gender-discriminatory language

Manmade fabrics can actually require less man power to produce than natural fabrics.

Gender-neutral language

Synthetic fabrics can actually require fewer human resources to produce than natural fabrics.

Gender-discriminatory language

The forefathers of today's villagers used the same methods for catching fish as today's villagers.

Gender-neutral language

The ancestors of today's villagers used the same methods for catching fish as today's villagers.

| Gender-discriminatory language | Gender-neutral language |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Policeman or policewoman | Police officer |
| Businessman or businesswoman | Business executive |
| Repairman | Repairer, technician |
| Steward or Stewardess | Flight attendant |
| Salesman | Salesperson, sales clerk |
| Workman | Worker |

Tips:

- English gives you the option to make generic terms apply to women as well, e.g. 'landlord' or 'landlady', but it is generally better to use a gender-neutral term for most professions.
- When referring to a mixed gendered group you should avoid the phrase 'the guys' as this takes the male as generic and representative of the whole group.