

Gender-sensitive Communication

Avoid gendered stereotypes as descriptive terms

Avoid using words which imply a gender connotation to describe an aspect of a person or object. It is especially important to avoid doing this where the gendered term is used as an insult.

These expressions normally paint the feminine as the negative. Describing something as feminine is used as an insult, often to mean weak or ineffective. Using language in this way is sexist. Do not employ gender stereotypes to describe the way something is or the way the action is done.



Oneinchpunch, Scoring like a girl, Shutterstock

Examples

Gender-insensitive language

Paul's effeminate handshake did not impress his new boss, who believes salespeople need a firm handshake.

Gender-sensitive language

Paul's weak handshake did not impress his new boss, who believes salespeople need a firm handshake.

Gender-insensitive language

You throw like a girl.

Gender-sensitive language

*You do not throw well.**

* This is the implied usage of the phrase 'like a girl' in English, to do something badly or in a silly or weak manner. Some campaigners are trying to reclaim this phrase to show the positive side of being 'like a girl!'

Gender-insensitive language

The team taking part in the charity obstacle course who were scared of the cold water had to man up, and dive in at the first obstacle.

Gender-neutral language

The team taking part in the charity obstacle course who were scared of the cold water had to be tough and dive in at the first obstacle.