Gender-sensitive Communication

Avoid using stereotypical images

We communicate ideas about the world not only through language, but also through the images we choose to use. A piece of communication is gender-discriminatory if the people within the images are only depicted in stereotypical ways (i.e. female home makers, male builders).

Make sure that that the images you use in your communication material do not reinforce gender stereotypes by including a wide mix of people in different environments.

Examples

The images on the left depict stereotypical images of doctors as male and nurses as female. In order to be gender inclusive, it may be a good idea to have more than one person in the images you use to go alongside images of people doing jobs.
Tip: Colours are often arbitrarily connected to one gender, such as pink for women and blue for men. When designing communication materials, check the colours you have used and don’t use colour as a shorthand for gender.

### Emojis

Many people use emojis (or emoticons) to express themselves when communicating electronically. Many of these emoji sets repeat stereotypes by putting men in active roles (sports people, or professionals) and only including women in stereotypical pursuits (cutting hair or dancers), or not including women at all. Some providers now include more options so that you can make more inclusive and gender-sensitive choices. When you use emojis remember these are also a way to make your communication supportive of gender equality.

Tip: Make sure you are using the most up-to-date version of your chosen emoji software – this will give you the widest range of options which will help you make a gender-sensitive choice.