

Gender-sensitive Communication

Common challenges when using gender-sensitive language

This section presents the most common stumbling blocks when trying to write in a gender-sensitive manner. It is designed to help you understand the issues which lead to language being gender-discriminatory so that you can recognise gender-discriminatory language when it occurs.

Tip: The [Practical Tools section](#) contains a table of solutions to help you use gender-sensitive language on a day-to-day basis.

Categories of gender-discriminatory language

There are three broad categories under which much gender-discriminatory language falls:

- 1 **Stereotypes: assigning gender when gender is unknown or irrelevant as a result of stereotypes.**
- 2 **Invisibility and omission: language which casts the male as the generic norm and keeps women from being visible in public life.**
- 3 **Subordination and trivialisation: language which paints one gender, often women, as inferior, or belittles them.**

These three categories are very closely related. In fact, invisibility, omission, subordination and trivialisation stem from gender stereotypes and can reflect attitudes held across society.

Tip: Always ask yourself if what you are saying could fall into any of these categories – if so, think of a different way to express yourself.

Non-linguistic communication

There are many ways of communicating and we include some reference to other forms of visual communication, such as images and emojis.