

Gender-sensitive Communication

Why should I ever mention gender?

In practice it is not always easy to judge where your language falls on the inclusive/exclusive scale, so you may feel that it is safest to avoid any mention of gender altogether.

Indeed, we sometimes **recommend** gender-neutral expressions as **one way of avoiding gender-discriminatory language**, i.e. language that fosters stereotypes or demeans/ignores a gender. The logic here is: if we are treating women and men as equal, gender is 'irrelevant' to the discussion and we should not state it explicitly. This is true in many cases, particularly when discussing occupations.

One potential benefit of gender-neutral language is that it can be more inclusive to those who do not identify in a binary way with one gender. The use of 'they' and the development of new gender-neutral pronouns (such as 'zhe') is another step in this direction.

Although gender-neutral/gender-blind language can be appropriate in certain situations, **it comes with clear downsides**. It often takes the male perspective as its basis and can therefore hide important differences in the roles, situations and needs of women/girls and men/boys. Gender-blind projects, programmes and policies do not take into account these diverse roles and needs. They can maintain the status quo and fail to help transform the unequal structure of gender relations. In this respect, only gender-sensitive language is likely to be up to the task.

[Read more about gender blindness in EIGE's Glossary & Thesaurus →](#)