

## **Non-Sexist Language**

SUU Writing Center

(last revised 11/06/09)

**The information included in this tip sheet is suggested and supported by the NCTE Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language, which may be found online at the following website:**

**<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/lang/107647.htm>**

### **What is gender-biased language?**

Gender-biased language is language that, either in grammatical use or direct statement, omits women or men and/or enforces masculine and feminine stereotypes.

### **Are there certain words or phrases I should watch for?**

Certain male-specific words or phrases should be replaced by an equivalent gender-fair term.

#### ***Some examples of male-specific words:***

mankind  
man-made  
a man's job  
the common man  
man the register

#### ***Some examples of replacement terms:***

humankind, humanity, people, human beings  
synthetic, artificial, non-natural  
a difficult task, an arduous job  
the average person, ordinary people  
staff the register

### **What about using job titles?**

Most job titles that were gender-specific terms in the past today have an equivalent gender-fair synonym.

#### ***Some examples of gender-specific job titles:***

mailman  
stewardess/steward  
waitress/waiter  
saleswoman/salesman  
fireman  
policewoman/policeman  
congressman  
chairman

#### ***Some examples of gender-fair job titles:***

mail carrier, postal worker  
flight attendant  
server  
sales representative, sales clerk  
fire fighter  
police officer  
congressional representative  
chair, chairperson, moderator

### **How can I treat men and women equally in writing, not enforcing stereotypes?**

Although men and women may have played specific roles in past decades, recent years have shown a great diversity in abilities, responsibilities, and occupations of both men and women; therefore, great care should be taken in approaching these traditional roles in writing.

#### ***Some examples of gender-specific stereotypes:***

Fathers, please practice the softball techniques with your child.  
Convention speakers and their wives will be present.  
The department chair should note faculty attendance at each meeting he holds.

#### ***Some examples of gender-fair statements:***

Parents, please practice the softball techniques with your child.  
Convention speakers and their guests will be present.  
The department chair should note faculty attendance at each meeting held.

**FOR MORE HELP WITH AVOIDING NON-SEXIST LANGUAGE, PLEASE TURN THE PAGE**

## What are some ways to correct the gender-biased he/his?

There are a number of ways to amend sexist language errors when dealing with pronoun usage.

<p>Drop the gender-specific term altogether.</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> The doctor should have a calming effect on <b>his patients</b>.</p> <p><i>Correction:</i> The doctor should have a calming effect on <b>patients</b>.</p>
<p>Make the subject plural.</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> Each <b>student</b> should bring <b>his</b> paper to class for a peer-edit.</p> <p><i>Correction:</i> All <b>students</b> should bring <b>their</b> papers to class for a peer-edit.</p>
<p>Use one/one's to replace gender-specific terms. Be careful not to overuse this solution; it may have an effect on the tone of your paper.</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> If <b>the student</b> attends the writing center, <b>his</b> writing will definitely improve.</p> <p><i>Correction:</i> If <b>one</b> attends the writing center, <b>one's</b> writing will definitely improve.</p>
<p>Use both male and female pronouns (<b>him/her, his/her, and s/he</b>).</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> The healthy athlete should get the appropriate amount of rest before <b>his</b> match.</p> <p><i>Correction:</i> The healthy athlete should get the appropriate amount of rest before <b>his/her</b> match.</p>