

(last updated 05/11/16)

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.

<p><i>Some examples of male-specific words:</i> Mankind, man-made, a man's job, the common man, man the register.</p>	<p><i>Some examples of replacement terms:</i> Humanity, people, a difficult task, an arduous job, the average person, staff the register.</p>
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What about using job titles?

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

<p><i>Some examples of gender-specific job titles:</i> Mailman, steward/stewardess, waitress/waiter, saleswoman/salesman, fireman, policewoman/policeman, congressman, chairman.</p>	<p><i>Some examples of gender-fair job titles:</i> Mail carrier, postal worker, flight attendant, server, sales representative, sales clerk, firefighter, police officer, congressional representative, chair/chairperson, moderator.</p>
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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. Where possible, acknowledge both genders' efforts and abilities.

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 patients.</p>
<p>Make the subject plural.</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> All students should bring their 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 one attends the writing center, one's writing will definitely improve.</p>
<p>Use both male and female pronouns (him/her, his/her, and s/he).</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> The healthy athlete should get the appropriate amount of rest before his/her match.</p>