

A Guide to Gender-Sensitive Language and Images



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1. Introduction

This guide aims to foster a fair and inclusive way of communication in order to increase the visibility of all people with a focus on gender. We would like to break up stereotyped gender roles, raise awareness of the before-mentioned and therefore prevent inequality and discrimination.

Since there are various ideas discussing the implementation of gender-sensitive language, we have compiled this guide to create a common language within the company and make it easier to put gender-sensitive language into practice.

Key aims:

1. Recognise and challenge stereotypes.
2. Be inclusive and make others visible.
3. Be respectful, avoid trivialisation and subordination.
4. Avoid sexist and discriminatory language. Use gender-neutral language but prefer gender-sensitive language.
5. Make women visible in language.
6. Men and women should be presented as equals.

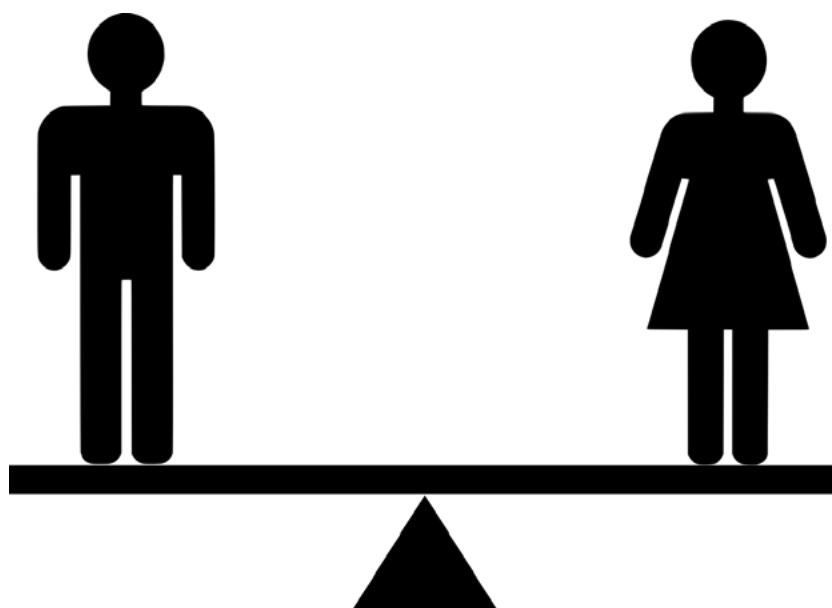


Image:
Mohamed Hassan at Pixabay

2. Gender-sensitive language

2.1. Use both genders: she or he, he/she

When referring to somebody in general terms, please use either:

he or she

or

she/he

Examples:

Avoid:	Preferred:
If a student studies hard, he will succeed.	If a student studies hard, she/he will succeed.
No one must be discriminated against on the grounds of his national origin.	No one must be discriminated against on the grounds of her or his national origin.
Every day, each citizen must ask himself how he can fulfil his civic duties.	Every day, each citizen must ask himself/ herself how he/she can fulfil his/her civic duties. or Every day, each citizen must ask themselves how they can fulfil their civic duties.
I need to speak to the secretary. Is she in the office?	I need to speak to the secretary. Is she or he in the office? (when not knowing the gender of a person)

2.2. Gender-neutral pronouns

When referring to a group of people or people in general, please use they/their/them.

Avoid:	Preferred:
Has each student chosen his group?	Has each student chosen their group?
If a student wants to learn more about basic science, he should read this book.	If students want to learn more about basic science, they should read this book.
The number of years an electrician will spend training depends on what country he is from.	The number of years an electrician will spend training depends on what country they are from.

2.3. Gender-neutral nouns

Avoid:	Preferred:
man (when referring to people in general terms)	person, individual, human being, people
mankind	people, humankind, men and women
spokesman	chair, chairperson, coordinator
manpower	staff, labour force, employees, workers, human resources
man-made	machine-made, synthetic

2.4. Form of address

Avoid:	Preferred:
Miss, Mrs	Ms (accepted plural: Mesdames)
Mr and Mrs John Smith	Jane and John Smith, Mr and Ms Smith
Dear Sir (when the addressee is unknown)	Singular: Dear Colleague, Dear Madam/Sir, Dear Sir/Madam Plural: Dear Colleagues, Dear all,

3. Gender-sensitive images

When taking pictures of groups, be aware of the visual imagery.

- women should not be hidden and/or stand in the back
- women and men should be positioned as equals
- the centre point of your image should not be a man

Avoid: Women should not be positioned as outsiders.



Preferred: Men and women should be positioned equally.



Sources

European Institute for Gender Equality: Gender-sensitive Communication <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-sensitive-communication/first-steps-towards-more-inclusive-language/why-should-i-ever-mention-gender>

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