



Using Non-Sexist Language

Generic Use

Although the use of MAN once carried the dual meaning of adult human and adult male, its meaning has come to be so closely identified with adult male that the generic use of MAN and other words with masculine markers should be avoided.

Examples

Mankind
man's achievements
manmade
the common man
man the stockroom
nine man-hours

Alternatives

humanity, people, human beings
humanity's achievements
synthetic, manufactured, machine-made
the average person, ordinary people
staff the stockroom
nine staff-hours

Occupations

Avoid the use of MAN in occupational terms when persons holding the job could be either male or female.

Examples

chairman
businessman
fireman
mailman
steward and stewardess
policeman and policewoman
congressman

Alternatives

coordinator/moderator/ presiding officer
business executive
firefighter
mail carrier
flight attendant
police officer
congressional representative

Pronouns

Because English has no generic singular or common-sex pronoun, we have used HE, HIS, and HIM in such expressions as "the student needs HIS pencil." When we constantly personify "the judge," "the critic," "the executive," "the author," as male by using the pronoun HE, we subtly condition ourselves against the idea of a female judge, critic, executive, or author. There are several alternative approaches for ending the exclusion of women that results from the pervasive use of masculine pronouns.

1. Reword into the plural

Example: Give each student his paper as soon as he is finished.

Alternative: Give students their papers as soon as they are finished.

2. Reword to eliminate gender problems

Example: The average student is worried about his grade.

Alternative: The average student is worried about grades.

3. Replace the masculine pronoun with ONE, YOU, or HE OR SHE, sparingly.

Example: If a student was satisfied with his performance on the pretest, he took the post-test.

Alternative: A student who was satisfied with his or her performance on the pretest took the post-test.

4. Alternate male and female expressions. Be careful not to confuse the reader.

Example: Let each student participate. Has he had a chance to talk? Could he feel left out?

Alternative: Let each student participate. Has she had a chance to talk? Could he feel left out?

Indefinite Pronouns

Using the masculine pronouns HE or HIM to refer to an indefinite pronoun (everybody, everyone, anybody and anyone) also has the effect of excluding women. In all but strictly formal uses, plural pronouns have become acceptable substitutes for the masculine singular.

Example: Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring his money tomorrow.

Alternative: Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring their money tomorrow.