

## Nonsexist and Non-Gendered Language

For a long time, writing conventions have favored traditional gender binaries. These conventions are so ingrained in custom that many students unknowingly employ sexist or gendered language in their writing without realizing it. This matters because the language we use has an impact on people's perceptions of others and the world.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Pronouns

When speaking or writing, it is important to refer to people by their preferred pronoun. Though many people feel perfectly comfortable with "she" or "he," others may prefer the gender-neutral "they," "ze," or another pronoun.

Subject	Object	Possessive	Reflexive
She <i>She</i> is speaking.	Her I listened to <i>her</i> .	Hers The backpack is <i>hers</i> .	Herself She talks to <i>herself</i> .
He <i>He</i> is speaking	Him I listened to <i>him</i> .	His The backpack is <i>his</i> .	Himself He talks to <i>himself</i> .
They <i>They</i> are speaking.	Them I listened to <i>them</i> .	Theirs The backpack is <i>theirs</i> .	Themselves They talk to <i>themselves</i> .
Ze <i>Ze</i> is speaking.	Hir/Zir I listened to <i>hir</i> .	Hirs/Zirs The backpack is <i>zirs</i> .	Hirself/Zirself <i>Ze</i> talks to <i>hirself</i> .

If you are speaking generally or do not know the gender of your subject, best practice is to use they/them/theirs, even if the subject is singular. A lot of people feel unsure about this because earlier education taught "they" as a plural pronoun; however, even the APA style manual has changed their rules for this to be acceptable.

### Generics

It is important to use gender-neutral generic terms to maintain inclusivity.

#### Gendered

When ancient *man* developed agriculture....

*Mankind* has been at war for hundreds of years.

A *man* has the right to life.

#### Non-Gendered

When ancient *people* developed agriculture...

*Humans* have been at war for hundreds of years.

A *person* has a right to life.

## Professions

Many titles for professions are unnecessarily gendered. Use non-gendered alternatives to avoid stereotyping. Here are just a few examples:

<u>Gendered</u>	<u>Non-Gendered</u>	<u>Gendered</u>	<u>Non-Gendered</u>
housewife	homemaker	watchman	guard
waitress	waiter/server	fireman	fire fighter
maid, cleaning lady	housekeeper	foreman	supervisor
stewardess/steward	flight attendant	headmaster/mistress	principle
businessman	business person, entrepreneur	craftsman	craftsperson, artisan
chairman	chairperson, chair	policeman	police officer
congressmen	members of congress, representatives	repairman	repair (better: plumber, carpenter, electrician...)

## Adjectives and Expressions

Adjectives and expressions can also be unnecessarily gendered. Here are a few examples:

<u>Gendered</u>	<u>Non-Gendered</u>	<u>Gendered</u>	<u>Non-Gendered</u>
gentleman's agreement	informal agreement	mothering, fathering	parenting
fatherland	homeland	man-to-man	person-to-person
founding fathers	founders	layman, layman's terms	common, informal, nontechnical

Instead of using terms like *manly*, *ladylike*, *womanly*, *motherly*, or others that may relate to gender stereotypes, use specific adjectives that are untied to stereotypical gender qualities.

### Some Gender-Free Adjectives

sensitive, polite, rude, brave, courageous, fearful, strong, weak, physical, emotional, adventurous, spirited, direct, competitive, mechanical, logical, active, lazy, messy, tidy, confident, insecure, supportive, cooperative, independent, creative, nurturing, protective