

feminist sexual culture

Lesbian sexual culture

↳ doesn't have problem  
lesbian sexual & have

sleeping c. the enemy - somehow not  
pure enough

Marriage sexuality  
sentinel marriage oil

Open chat

o.k. - comes from the east  
none of this is quite it

her - sexual biography

11 years - grabbed breast & kept walking

12 - good best girlfriend

14 - got a boyfriend

was moved along w. without control




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40 year old men -

Lead to young girls

**WORDS**  
THAT COUNT  
**WOMEN**  
**OUT IN**



Ontario  
Women's  
Directorate





**Please note:**

This is a popular guide to eliminating gender bias in writing and speech. It is not meant to be a complete treatment of the subject. We hope that it will help you incorporate inclusive language in your communications.

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Please feel free to photocopy this material to share with your colleagues.

We are interested in your experiences with inclusive language. To share your creative solutions to "counting women in," (they may appear in our next edition) or for additional copies of this guide, call or write:

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## THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

An introduction to the 'why' of  
inclusive language

---

"O Canada, our home and native land  
True patriot love in all thy sons command..."

Picture two children singing these lyrics-- a girl and a boy. Think of the images formed in their minds. The boy sees countless males like himself, all standing on guard for their country. He feels fully part of the patriotic fervor, a true son of Canada.

The girl is not so lucky. Since our national anthem says nothing about daughters, she can't help wondering whether it applies to her. Can only men be patriots?

"O Canada," the symbol of our democratic spirit, excludes half the population. The single word "sons" tells women they do not belong. You could argue that other words express the anthem's point -- words like "glowing hearts" or "true north strong and free." You could even argue that "sons" is just a synonym for "people" and Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, published by Merriam-Webster Inc., 1991 would back you up. One meaning it cites is "a person closely associated with or deriving from a formative agent (as a nation, school or race)."

But words create images more powerful than any definition. If you don't choose your words with care, they may send a message you never intended: in this case, that it's a man's world.

Words most of us use daily do exactly that. "Weatherman" suggests that all weather reporters are male. "Frenchmen" implies that the French are all male. "Mankind" portrays male-



ness as the norm for our species. You'd think every species was male, the way the lion at the zoo, the dinosaur in the museum and the friendly mutt in the local park are all referred to as "he." Even God must be male, to judge from phrases such as "God in His wisdom."



## IT'S A MATTER OF CLARITY

### Reasons for, arguments against, inclusive language

---

All speakers and writers share the same goal: clear communication. Male-biased words don't meet the challenge. They hark back to a world that no longer exists, a world with no place for women's aspirations. They cause needless doubts and needless offense. Unless you learn to spot them and change them, they'll distract attention from your point.

It's easier than it sounds. Take "O Canada." Suppose "all thy sons" were changed to "all of us," the lyrics would still trip off the tongue -- but they would speak to everyone, not just men.

That's the guiding principle of bias-free language: it includes the whole audience. It's not just the fair way to communicate. Now that women make space flights and hold cabinet posts, it's the only way that works.

This common sense idea has met fierce resistance, and no wonder. Today's inclusive language breaks rules we've all followed since grade school. But the case against change doesn't hold up to scrutiny. Take a close look at the following arguments:

### *"What difference does it make?"*

Study after study shows that biased language is fuzzy language. When they read the words "man" or "he," people of all ages tend to picture males.

Biased language distorts perceptions. In a classic 1974 study, junior high school students were asked to draw the activ-



ities of primitive people. One group received instructions about "early man." The other followed gender neutral instructions. Both groups drew more males than females. But when instructions referred to "people" and "humans," the number of female figures increased.

Biased language can dampen young women's aspirations. A 1983 study found women less likely to consider a career in psychology when the career description used the male pronoun. As if all this weren't reason enough to watch our language, getting rid of bias clearly motivates women. In a 1984 study, female students recalled information better when the researchers used sex-neutral terms.

*"You can't rewrite the English language."*

No one is rewriting the language. Rather, the language is evolving to keep pace with the times, as it has done since the days of the troubadours. The Simpsons don't speak like the Capulets and the Montagues. And just look at the new words that have flooded dictionaries since the '60s: preppy, tofu, quark, hacker, sunblocker, flexitime... the list goes on. These words exist because they meet a need.

Similarly, other words have gone the way of spats and corsets. You hardly ever hear the term "authoress" these days, and "doctress" is all but forgotten. Yet as recently as the '20s, famed lexicographer H.W. Fowler defended "singeress" and teacheress." Fowler worried that without specialized terms to distinguish them, upstart professional women might be confused with the real experts -- their male counterparts.

*"Those new words are ridiculous."*

Sceptics heap scorn on "chair," a frontrunner to replace the biased "chairman." A chair, they insist, is a piece of furniture, not a person. In fact, the Oxford English Dictionary dates 1659 as the first use of "chair" in its contested sense. "Chairman"

entered the language just four years earlier.

Granted, "manhole cover" sounds more natural to many of us than the non-biased alternative, "sewer cover." But that's just because it's new. To our children's generation, "manhole cover" will likely seem downright quaint.

Male wags have dreamed up some undeniably ridiculous words in an effort to lampoon inclusive language. By replacing "man" with "person" wherever it appears, they've devised such clunkers as "personipulate" and "personacle." In fact, "manipulate" and "manacle" are here to stay because their root is not "man" but the Latin for hand, manus.

*"What you call biased, I call colorful."*

No question, some biased words exude color. Take "trollop," "shrew" and "biddy." These words appeal for the images they spark -- images that put women down. Sometimes, as with "oaf" and "scoundrel," it's men who are degraded in the name of lively writing. Either way, the result is the same -- stereotyping. There's another way to make your prose leap off the page. Verbs pack as much pictorial clout as nouns, with less potential for bias. "Tussle," "plod," "lurch," "slither"... verbs like these can set scenes for your reader. Countless others are as close as your thesaurus.



# STICKY WICKETS, and HOW to DODGE THEM

## Some advice on the rules of inclusive language

Changing lifelong habits calls for patience at first, but don't be surprised if your writing improves. Many biased expressions are clichés. Without them, you'll stretch your creativity.

Not that you need to be a literary whiz. Once you figure out where the danger zones are, dodging them will become second nature. A few simple ground rules will get you started.

### The Pronoun Puzzle

Grammatically speaking, the generic "he" includes women. Women's growing disagreement has inspired some pretty cumbersome proposals for a third person singular pronoun of indeterminate sex. "S/he" makes most readers wince; "tey" never caught on at all. "He or she" will do in a pinch, but grates with constant repetition.

What's a frustrated writer to do? Try one of three tricks:

- **Make the sentence plural.**

In the following sentence, all you'll lose is one word -- and that's a gain for your reader. The leaner your prose, the sharper your point. For example, change:

"Becoming a doctor can be a lonely experience, one that takes a large toll not only on the young doctor, but also on his patients."

*to*

"Becoming a doctor can be a lonely experience, one that takes a large toll not only on young doctors but also on patients."

-- *The New York Times Book Review*

- **Change "his" to "the."**

It's a simple way to fix this verbal gaffe:

"The member will promptly disclose to his [the] client any interest in a business which may affect the client."

-- Code of ethics, The American Society of Home Inspectors

Better yet, ask yourself if you can shorten the sentence. In the above example, it's understood that the member is disclosing to the client. Why not amend the sentence to read:

"The member will promptly disclose any interest in a business which may affect the client."

- **Use "they" as a singular pronoun.**

We know, we know -- "Everyone for themselves" would make your English teacher cringe. You're wise to avoid it in a speech to teachers or your company's annual report, but when you want an informal, colloquial style, the singular "they" could be your best bet.

This usage was considered correct until the mid-nineteenth century. As the closest thing we have to an indeterminate singular pronoun, "they" could be poised for a comeback. If it was good enough for Jane Austen and William Shakespeare, it should be good enough for the Rotary Club.

- **Alternate between "she" and "he."**

Whether you're referring to university students, employees or kids at summer camp, this tactic beats constant repetition of "he or she." Just watch out for sex-typed exam-



ples. The employee dashing to the day care centre is not necessarily "she." The youngster in tears over a classmate's teasing might be "he."

#### • In a pinch . . .

Change "he" to "one" or "the individual," or use the passive voice. But both techniques, while often recommended, tend to make for stilted writing. Once you get the hang of the others, you shouldn't need them.

### One Size Fits All?

"Some entomologists consider insects to be man's chief competitor, mainly because insects and man both utilize the same things."

-- "Entomology in Canada: Career Opportunities"

Synonyms for "man" abound (see "Words to the Wise"), so this verbal gaffe is easily fixed. Consider just one possible revision:

"Some entomologists consider insects to be humans' chief competitor, mainly because insects utilize the same things we do."

You may wonder why "humans" should be preferable to "man." Similar as the two words appear, they come from different roots -- "humans from the Latin "homo" and "man" from the Old English "mann." Both roots meant "human being."

"Man" also turns up as a verb. Here's an example from the front page of the *Globe and Mail*:

"We have... found... a declining confidence in our system of parliamentary democracy, and in the politicians who man the system."

-- pollster Michael Adams

Why not change "man" to "run"? It's not just male politicians who have fallen from favor.

### Type-Casting

No matter what a woman achieves outside the home, her domestic talents attract constant scrutiny. When astronaut Dr. Roberta Bondar made her 1992 space flight, the *Toronto Star* ran this front-page headline:

"Canadian in space does 'housework'"

"Bondar spends hour tidying up shuttle"

A highly skilled physician and scientist, Dr. Bondar was spending no more time on "housework" than her male colleagues on the shuttle. Her efforts really focused on scientific experiments -- and had she been male, the headline writer would undoubtedly have said so.

The *Star* had trivialized a Canadian hero, and readers of both sexes were outraged. Within a day, more than 150 calls had bombarded the paper. Not for years had it faced such fury.

We don't hear much about Eric Lindros' cooking, or how much time Brian Mulroney spends with his kids. But let a woman step into the spotlight, and reporters suddenly wonder about her cooking schedule and her child care arrangements. They exclaim over her skill at balancing work and family, as if to say, "Don't worry, guys, she's still a normal woman at heart." When her children grow up, she's still not home free. People recently described a female biographer as "a spunky mother of four and grandmother of six."

If you've ever introduced a female speaker, you may have made the same blunder. We suggest this guideline: don't mention a woman's domestic life unless you would make the same comment of a man in her position.

One more word of advice: don't assume that only women run homes. That's the message implied in this sentence from a



*Globe and Mail* article on marketing:

"The dinner plates that the German hausfrau and the English housewife deemed acceptable, caused French women to laugh in disbelief."

Who says that only women were laughing? A few simple changes make the sentence more accurate -- and concise:

"The dinner plates that the Germans and the English deemed acceptable caused the French to laugh in disbelief."

### The Beauty Factor

"She's so fresh-faced, so blue-eyed, so ruby-lipped, so 12-car-pileup gorgeous, 5'5" and 114 pounds of peacekeeping missile."

-- *Sports Illustrated* on figure skater Katerina Witt

Women's looks, like their homemaking, garner needless attention. A poet is praised for her "charm," an athlete for "moving like a model." Is this how we generally talk about men?

A Canadian magazine once published a woman's article on the Toronto Blue Jays -- more specifically, on watching their bottoms under those tight uniforms. She speculated at length on which Blue Jay cut the cutest figure while at bat. In short, she wrote about men the way men tend to write about women. The response, however, was different. Angry letters accused the magazine of trivializing baseball.

Two themes stand out in irrelevant descriptions of women. One is sexuality, the other fragility. Here's an example of woman-as-rosebud prose:

"She is a young, elegant woman with the pert appeal of a

gamine. But her fragile good looks contradict the power she wields in the fiercely competitive fashion world."

-- *Flare* on Fairweather president Lynn Posluns

"Pert" and "gamine," words only applied to women, shrink the executive's stature. "See how tiny she is," the passage seems to say. "She's not one of those power-hungry women. She wouldn't hurt a fly." Equally belittling -- to all women, not just Posluns -- is the presumed opposition between power and good looks. Why shouldn't female presidents look good? Does power turn women into drab, grim-faced martinets?

As with child care, so with looks: if you wouldn't comment on a man's, then don't comment on a woman's.

### Backhanded Compliments

At a high school commencement ceremony, a teacher hands a male graduate his award. "This fine young man is an inspiration to his classmates," she declares. Then the teacher honors his female classmate. She is called "a spunky little lady, a joy to us all."

Which prizewinner sounds more impressive? The male graduate -- no contest. "Inspiration" connotes action and leadership, while "joy to us all" connotes the supposedly feminine virtues of kindness and good humor.

As for "little lady," you don't hear males described as "little men." Next time you write a job reference for a woman, watch the words you choose. Are they the ones you'd select for a man with the same skills? Or are they words used only of women -- like "irrepressible" instead of "dauntless," "perky" instead of "energetic," "spunky" instead of "determined"?

Perhaps the most backhanded compliment of all is comparing a woman to men -- as in "She thinks like a man." Intellectual rigor is not a male trait -- and neither is guts.



## The Parallelism Principle

"Lyn Goes After Rae"

-- Toronto Sun

What's wrong with this headline? It denies a woman, Ontario Liberal leader Lyn McLeod, the respect it gives a man, premier Bob Rae. Like many news media, the Sun identifies adults by their last names -- unless they happen to be women. Then they can be treated like children.

To eliminate the bias, just make the headline parallel: either

"Lyn Goes After Bob" or "McLeod Goes After Rae."

Fair's fair. The same principle applies in daily life. If you are addressing men as "Dr." or "Professor," be just as formal with the women in the group. Those who have no titles deserve the courtesy of "Ms." And never call a woman by her first name unless you expect her to use yours.

## Women Writers, Male Nurses: Does it Matter?

"... a male nurse and a doctor had saved my life..."

-- Andre Dubus in *Broken Vessels*

Female nurses save lives too. But this sentence, by identifying the nurse's sex, portrays heroism as a male trait. Many references to gender serve no useful purpose. All they do is degrade people.

Sometimes both sexes bear the damage. For instance, the term "male secretary" implies that secretarial work is for sissies and women. More often, though, it's only women who are hurt. No one ever calls Mordecai Richler "one of our greatest male writers." But Alice Munro can be labeled "one of our greatest

woman writers," as if her work couldn't stand comparison with men's. Don't mention gender unless clarity demands it, as in this headline from the *Globe and Mail*:

"Male secretary ruled sexism victim"

## Ladies' Day is Over

"Ladies' dresses," "ladies' night," "ladies and escorts," "the lady next door."

The word "lady" may have fallen from favor, but it still turns up in a multitude of contexts. Only two meet the standards of the '90s. When men are "gentlemen" or "lords," then women can be "ladies."

Many people wonder what's wrong with "lady." To them, it means graciousness, elegance and refinement -- all positive traits. The catch is that they constitute a female stereotype.

Our society does not expect graciousness of men, but demands it of women. "Lady" harks back to the rules that every daughter used to learn from her mother: "A lady always wears gloves," "A lady never wears white after Labor Day."

Besides, "lady," unlike gentleman, has some downright negative meanings. A "lady of the evening" is a prostitute. "Little old lady" conjures images of fluttery helplessness.

To address an adult as "young lady" or "little lady" is to condescend to her. And that's no way to treat a woman.

## What's Wrong with this Picture?

Your speech may be a model of gender-neutrality, but if your slides show women in stereotyped roles, they'll undermine your message. Make sure the images you choose pass the following tests:

- They include women. Your company's technicians may be a mostly male group. It's likely to stay that way unless you



photograph the woman on the team.

- They give women and men equal prominence. If you feature men in full-page color shots, don't tuck black-and-whites of women in the gutter. If captions identify men by name, women deserve equal treatment.
- They don't turn women into sex objects. In a *Maclean's* photographic feature on outstanding Canadians, athlete Silken Laumann appeared in a slinky cocktail dress with a pair of oars at her side. The men in the story wore their normal working garb.

### Letter Perfect

Almost every letter that leaves your desk makes a statement about gender. Here's how to keep it in step with the times:

- Avoid "Mr. and Mrs." salutations. If a woman has kept her birth name, the correct form might be "Dear Margaret Anderson and David Hodges." (Alphabetical order determines which name comes first.)

If the woman has a professional title, you might write, "Dear Mr. De Marco and Dr. Khan." In any case, today's wives are not extensions of their husbands. "Dear Nancy and Tom Cohen" is preferable to "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Cohen."

- Use Ms. salutations instead of Mrs. or Miss. Make exceptions only for women who sign themselves Mrs. or Miss.
- Don't be too quick to assume that you're writing to a man. "R.L. Jones" could be a woman who detests being addressed as "Mr." The gender-neutral salutation is "Dear R.L. Jones."

- Keep your closing simple. Don't sign yourself "Ms." or "Mr." unless you use your initials or have a gender-neutral first name, such as Leslie.





# WORDS TO THE WISE:

## A Glossary

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### The Work World

#### *Biased*

actress  
ad man, advertising man  
  
airman  
alderman  
anchorman  
assemblyman  
aviatrix  
ballerina  
barmaid, barman  
bellboy, bellman  
busboy  
businessman  
  
cabin boy  
call girl  
career girl, career woman  
  
cameraman, cameramen  
cleaning lady  
clergyman  
comedienne  
concertmaster  
cowboy, cowgirl

#### *Bias-free*

actor  
advertising manager,  
advertising representative  
aviator, flyer, pilot  
municipal councillor  
anchor  
assembler  
aviator  
ballet dancer  
bartender  
bellhop  
busser  
business executive,  
professional, entrepreneur  
cabin attendant  
prostitute  
professional, manager,  
executive  
camera operator, camera crew  
cleaner  
clergy, cleric  
comedian, comic  
concert leader, concert director  
cowhand, ranch hand

#### *Bias*

craftsman  
delivery boy  
dockman  
doorman  
draftsman  
dressmaker  
engineman  
fireman  
fisherman  
ferryman  
foreman  
frogman  
gasman  
  
girl Friday  
  
harbor master  
insurance man  
journeyman  
landlady, landlord  
  
lineman  
longshoreman  
mailman  
meter man, meter maid  
newsman  
paperboy  
patrolman  
policeman, policewoman  
poetess  
quarryman  
repairman  
saleslady, salesman

#### *Bias-free*

artisan  
courier, messenger  
dockhand, dockworker  
doorkeeper, porter  
drafting technician  
tailor, alterationist  
engine operator  
firefighter  
fisher  
ferry operator  
supervisor  
underwater technician  
gas fitter, gas pipe installer,  
gas pipe repairer  
clerk, office assistant,  
receptionist  
harbor chief  
insurance agent  
trade worker  
proprietor, householder,  
building manager  
lineworker, line installer  
dockhand, shorehand  
mail carrier, letter carrier  
meter reader  
journalist, reporter, newshound  
paper carrier  
patrol officer  
police officer  
poet  
quarrier, quarry worker  
repairer, technician  
salesclerk, sales representative,  
sales rep, sales agent



**Bias**

serviceman

sideman

steward, stewardess

union man

waitress

watchman

weatherman

workman

**World of Play**

fisherman

gamesman

handyman

horseman, horsewoman

linksman

outdoorsman

rifleman, marksman

sportsman

yachtsman

**Roles People Play**

alumni

benefactress

boyfriend, girlfriend

boys in blue

chairman, chairwoman

coed

committee man,

committee woman

**Bias-free**

service representative, repairer,  
technician

side-player, member of the

band, backup musician

flight attendant

unionist, union member, union

organizer

waiter, server

guard, security guard

weather reporter

worker

angler

gamester, games buff

do-it-yourselfer

rider

golfer

hunter, nature lover

sharpshooter, crack shot

sports buff, sports enthusiast,

athlete

yachter, yacht owner

graduates

benefactor

partner

armed forces

chair, chairperson

student

committee member

**Bias**

corporate wife

faculty wife

freshman

front man

hatchet man

henchman

heiress

heroine

hostess

housewife, househusband

layman

middleman

man and wife

ombudsman

self-made man

spokesman

**The Human Family**

brotherhood

common man

countryman

distaff side

fair sex, weaker sex

fatherland

fellowship

forefathers

fraternal

Frenchmen

**Bias-free**

corporate spouse

faculty spouse

first-year student

front, figurehead

hatchet, terminator, assassin

sidekick, lackey, right-hand

heir

hero, protagonist

host

homemaker

layperson, uninitiated,

nonprofessional

go-between

husband and wife

complaints investigator,

troubleshooter

self-made person,

entrepreneur

spokesperson, representative,

advocate

kinship, community

common person, average

person

compatriot

avoid

avoid

native land

camaraderie

ancestors, forebears

warm, intimate

the French



**Bias**

man, mankind

mother tongue

primitive man

rise of man

sons of God

thinking man

working woman,

working man

**Stereotypes**

balls (eg., "She's/  
he's got balls")

father time

femme fatale

kingdom

kingdom come

king-size

kingmaker

kingpin

lady

lady killer

ladylike

genteel

lady luck

like a man

maid of honor

maiden name

maiden voyage

man (verb)

**Bias-free**

humankind, humanity, our

species, humans

native language

primitive people

rise of civilization

children of God

thinking person, thinker,

intellectual

wage earner, taxpayer

guts, moxie

time

seducer

country, land, realm

the next world, paradise

jumbo, gigantic

power behind the throne,

eminence grise

linchpin, cornerstone

woman

seducer, popular with the

women

courteous, cultured,

gentle

luck

resolutely, bravely

bridal attendant

birth name

first voyage

staff, run

**Bias**

man enough

manhood

manly

man made

man of action

man of letters

man of the world

man-hour

manpower

man-to-man talk

meat-and-potatoes man

mother earth

motherly

mother nature

one-up-manship

sexpot, sex kitten

Renaissance man

statesman

tough guy

woman's intuition

workmanship

yeoman's service

**Turns of Phrase**

All men are created equal.

be his own man

best man for the job

Boys will be boys.

Dead men tell no tales.

**Bias-free**

strong enough

adulthood

strong, mature

artificial, synthetic,

machine-made

dynamo

scholar, writer, literary figure

sophisticate

staff hours, hours of work

workforce, personnel

heart-to-heart talk

the meat-and-potatoes type,

salt of the earth

the sustaining earth

loving, warm, nurturing

nature

upstaging, competitiveness

avoid

Renaissance type, person of

many talents

diplomat, public servant,

political leader

tough (n)

intuition

quality construction, expertise

heroic service



**Bias**

everybody and his brother

Every man for himself.

Every man has his price.

A fool and his money  
are soon parted.

John Q. Public

Every schoolboy knows.  
gentleman's agreement

Man does not live by  
bread alone.

A man's home is  
his castle.

man of few words

no-man's-land

to a man

The way to a man's  
heart is through his  
stomach.

**Put-downs**

bad guy

bag lady, bag man

bag man (political)

bimbo

con man

fall guy

**Bias-free**

everybody and their cousin,

all the world and their dog

Everyone for themselves.

Everyone has their price.

We all have our price.

Fools and their money are soon  
parted.

the average citizen

Every schoolchild knows.

honorable agreement,

honor system, informal

agreement

We don't live by bread alone.

Your home is your castle.

person of few words; strong,

silent type

limbo, dead zone, unclaimed  
territory

to a one, to a person, without  
exception

The way to the heart is  
through the stomach.

villain, rogue, ne'er-do-well

street person

go-between, fixer, shark

avoid

con artist

chump, dupe, scapegoat

**Bias**

girl (except for a child)

henpecked

mama's boy

manhandle

nervous Nellie

mother hen

old maid

old wives' tale

pantywaist

plain Jane

prodigal son

sissy

sob sister, advice columnist

spinster

tomboy

tomfoolery

weak sister

yes man

**Bias-free**

avoid

avoid

avoid

abuse, mistreat

worrywart, worrier

busybody, fussbudget

single woman or avoid

myth

avoid

avoid

spendthrift, returned prodigal

avoid

bleeding heart

single woman

rough and tumble child

shenanigans, monkey business

weak link in the chain

toady, hanger-on

**Judgment Calls**

Most authorities agree that "weatherman" is biased. But what about "patronize?" Some women loathe it because of its origins in the Latin for "father." Others argue that current usage comes first. And what better word to describe women's treatment by old-guard men who call them "honey?"

"Mastery" and its relatives pose a different problem. Their origin, an Indo-European root meaning "great" or "much" has nothing to do with men. But some women still perceive them as masculine. It doesn't help that "mistress," derived from the same root as "master," now connotes female sexuality rather than greatness.

There's no need to strike these words from your business vocabulary. But before you use them, consider the possible sensitivities of your audience -- as you would with any document



or speech. When in doubt, choose an alternative.

**The "patron" family**

**Alternatives**

patron	benefactor, sponsor, philanthropist, client, customer
patronage	sponsorship, promotion, influence
patronize	support, promote, or condescend to
patron saint	special saint

**The "master" family**

**Alternatives**

master (noun)	owner, expert, chief, superior
master (verb)	learn, succeed at, conquer, overcome, dominate, command
master (adj.)	expert, gifted, adroit, accomplished, award-winning
master bedroom	main bedroom
master of ceremonies	host, emcee, moderator, convenor
masterful	skilled, authoritative, commanding
mastermind (noun)	genius, creator, instigator
mastermind (verb)	oversee, launch, originate
masterpiece	work of genius, chef d'oeuvre, magnum opus, tour de force
masterplan	comprehensive plan, vision
masterstroke	trump card, stroke of genius





## LANGUAGE on THE MOVE

### 20 Years of Breakthroughs

1972

"Ms." makes its first dictionary appearance in The American Heritage School Dictionary.

1976

Dr. Benjamin Spock revises his classic Baby and Child Care using gender-neutral language.

1978

The federal Manpower and Immigration and Unemployment Commission becomes Employment and Immigration Canada.

1979

Quebec women legally keep their birth names after marriage, unless they apply for a name change. CBC adopts code to fight sexual stereotyping on air.

1981

Women successfully lobby for use of the word "person" throughout the Charter of Rights.

1983

The University of Waterloo eliminates biased language from calendars, policies and forms.

St. Jerome's College, part of UW, later changes the name of its alumni association to "the graduates' association."

1986

The National Museum of Man/Musée National de l'homme becomes the National Museum of Civilization/Musée national des civilisations (later changed to the Canadian Museum of Civilization/Musée canadien des civilisations).

1988

Toronto City Council votes to replace term "alderman" with "councillor."

1990

Toronto Transit Commission rejects beer ad depicting a woman as a "fox."

1992

Media office for Canadian Olympic team provides guidelines on bias-free sports reporting.



## WOMEN SPEAK UP about SEX-BIASED LANGUAGE

### ...at work

"Because I use my initials on all my correspondence, I get lots of letters addressing me as 'Mr.' I circle 'Mr.' and send them back unopened. Those people always call me with abject apologies."

### ... at home

"With two sons 12 and 9, I have boys running through the house all weekend. The worst insult they can hurl at each other is 'You're a girl.' It affects me like a punch in the stomach, so I always tell the kids that their language offends me. My sons roll their eyes, but they no longer use 'girl' as a term of abuse."

### ...on the phone

"I'm a psychologist. When I make a phone call and identify myself as 'Dr. Caplan,' I can't tell you often I'm mistaken for a secretary. The usual response is, 'What does he want?' I don't let it go by anymore -- it's too demeaning. I always ask, 'Do you think only men can have doctorates?'"

### ...in meetings

"I'm the vice-chair of a large volunteer board. The last time our executive had a working lunch together, a 20-year-old waiter asked us, 'Which one of you men should I give the bill to?' It was as if I'd disappeared -- and I was one of the senior

people there. I told the waiter, very firmly, 'None of them. Please give it to the woman.'"

### ... at the corner store

"My grocer calls all his female customers 'young lady,' even the ones in their sixties. I've told him nicely that I don't consider it a compliment, but he just won't stop. One of these days, I'm going to call him 'young man.'"

### ...at fundraisers

"I just attended a charity brunch. The speaker was a prominent physician who happens to be a woman. After the emcee told us about her grants and studies and awards, he added, to everyone's horror, 'On top of all that, she's got great legs.' A hiss went through the room."

### ...on university campuses

"I felt excluded when my political science professor kept talking about 'the nature of man.' One day in class, I asked her why she didn't say "human nature" instead. She didn't take me seriously. In every essay I wrote for her, we had battles over language. I'd write 'humankind'; she'd change it to 'mankind.' I'd use a plural; she'd change it to 'he.' Finally I complained to the head of the department. Now political science is the only department on campus that has guidelines on gender-neutral language."



## CRACKING DOWN on BIAS:

Insiders share their strategies

**Ruth Haehnal, editor, The Service Report:**

"Because my partner and I are women, we take pains to avoid stereotypes in our newsletter. If we run an article on bank tellers, we'll make sure that one of the tellers is male. When we write about managers, we feature women prominently."

**Rhoda Beecher, director of human resources, Ontario Hydro:**

"You have to talk to people, or they won't buy in. When we first tried to use gender-neutral language in a collective agreement, we faced a tremendous backlash. Men were saying, 'I'm not a meter reader, I'm a meter man.' We traded lists of terms with the union so they'd have some ownership of the issue. In a blue-collar workforce, men tend to identify themselves by what they do."

**Jane Davidson, senior public relations specialist, DuPont Canada Inc.**

"When I prepare the annual report, I make sure women are represented in the photographs. This year I had a reshoot done because the photographer shot only white males. Like other companies, we've had budget cutbacks, but I had the full support of the senior VP of finance. One of the slogans around here is 'diversity'-- capturing the variety of people who work for the company."

**Janet Thomson, senior producer, CBC TV's Street Cents**

"We needed a voiceover for a show that was seen through the point-of-view of our mascot, a pig. The men on the show only wanted to audition male voices. They thought a male voice would be more recognizable as a pig because most of the animals in cartoons have gruff male voices. When I pointed out that our pig was female, I got a lot of resistance. Then I asked them, 'If the pig was male, would we only audition female voices?' That did it. We used a female voice."





## WORD BUFFS, TAKE NOTE

These words all have one thing in common: they're used to put women down. But it wasn't always so. A few centuries back, some were used of both sexes and others had positive meanings. It seems that the moral of the story is nothing taints a word like association with women.

- **bluestocking --**  
referred to the plain clothing worn by both sexes at the literary salons of the 1750s. Later applied exclusively to the women, whose intellectual interests were considered beyond them.
- **courtesan --**  
meant the member of a pope's or prince's court until the late sixteenth century. Applied specifically to female prostitutes when Protestant England turned against the pope.
- **flibbertigibbet --**  
a chattering gossip of either sex until the nineteenth century, when it became female-specific. Has implied silliness ever since.
- **frigid --**  
a cold, formal person of either sex until the 1920s. Acquired its current meaning during a wave of feminist protest.

- **hooker --**  
may be derived from the archaic meaning of huckster, a hawker or peddler. Has been female-specific since the nineteenth century.
- **tomboy --**  
originally a rude, boisterous boy; later a promiscuous woman (sixteenth century). Applied to girls who behave "like boys" since the 1870s.
- **vamp --**  
from the same root as vampire. Originally a ruthless predator of either sex. Redefined as female during the promotion of a 1915 silent movie starring Theda Bara.





## SUGGESTED READING

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Department of Fisheries and Oceans. *How to Avoid Sexism in Communications*. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, 1987. (Practical, 14-page pamphlet for business readers).

King, Ruth, et al. *Talking Gender: A Guide to Nonsexist Communication*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman Ltd., 1991. (Covers both French and English. Includes a chapter on visual images).

Canadian National. *Striking a Balance: A Guide to Nonsexist Communication*. Available in French as *Les uns et les unes: guide pour une communication non sexiste*. Montreal: 1988.

Maggio, Rosalie. *The Nonsexist Word Finder: A Dictionary of Gender-free Usage*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989. (Origins and alternatives for more than 5,000 entries).

Miller, Casey and Swift, Kate. *Handbook of Nonsexist Writing*. Second Edition. New York: Harper Collins, 1988. (Common-sense tips with a wealth of real-life examples).

Miller, Casey and Swift, Kate. *Words and Women*. Updated. New York: Harper Collins, 1991. (Classic overview blends theory and advice).

Mills, Jane. *Womanwords*. Burnt Mill, Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1989. (Lively history of 300 words, from actress to womb, shows

how social context shapes meaning).

National Watch on Images of Women in the Media (Mediawatch) Inc. *Sex-role Stereotyping: A Content Analysis of Radio and Television Programs and Advertisements*. Vancouver: 1987.

Sorels, Bobbye D. *The Nonsexist Communicator: Solving the Problems of Gender and Awkwardness in Modern English*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983. (Stands out for tips on oral and nonverbal communication).

Spender, Dale. *Man Made Language*. Second edition. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. (The theory behind the move for bias-free language).

Sport Canada. *Words to Watch: Guidelines for Non-Sexist Sport Commentary*. Ottawa: 1992.

Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand: Talk Between the Sexes*. New York: Morrow, 1990. (Popular treatment of gender-based differences in communication style).