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The role of the chairman has evolved over time. Traditionally, it refers to a leader who oversees an organized group such as a board or committee. This person, often elected or appointed by members, is responsible for managing meetings and ensuring the group's business runs smoothly. In some organizations, the title of chairman may overlap with that of president. However, in others, these terms describe distinct positions within the organization. The use of the term chairman can be seen as neutral, not implying any specific gender. In formal settings such as conferences or parliamentary chambers, the person leading the event is said to "chair" the meeting. The term chairperson has been introduced as a more inclusive alternative to avoid implying a particular gender. This shift in language reflects changing attitudes towards equality and the exercise of authority. Different style guides offer varying recommendations for addressing a chairman, ranging from using Madame Chair or Mr. Chairman to simply referring to them as the chair or chairperson. The use of the word chair can also refer to the physical location where the leader presides over meetings. In parliamentary procedure, the person in charge is often referred to as "the chair" and may be situated at a designated place such as a chair or lectern. The tradition of addressing the "chair" as a specific title such as Mr. or Madam Chairman is rooted in maintaining impartiality and objectivity. This custom originated in various contexts, including British music halls, where the chairman served as master of ceremonies, and on television shows, like Leonard Sachs' *The Good Old Days*. In socialist states, the term "chairman" emerged as a way to refer to executive leaders, such as Lenin and Mao Zedong, who functioned without traditional leadership labels. In organizational settings, the chair's duties include presiding over meetings, determining agendas, and enforcing rules. While remaining impartial, the chair should not interrupt speakers and follows a set of guidelines for decision-making and voting. The powers of the chair vary depending on the organization's structure and rules, with some chairs holding significant authority to hire staff or make financial decisions, while others have limited executive powers. The consequences for failing to perform duties as a chairperson can be severe, involving disciplinary procedures such as censure, suspension, or removal from office. These measures are typically governed by the organization's rules, which outline who is authorized to impose them. In many cases, the individual responsible for appointing or electing the chair has the power to discipline them. There are three primary types of chairs in public corporations: executive, non-executive, and lead independent director. The chief executive officer may also hold the title of chair, often with a board-appointed independent member serving as lead independent director. This role is analogous to the president-directeur grnal position in France. An executive chair holds significant influence over company operations, whereas a non-executive chair focuses on overseeing compliance, audit, and strategy without intervening in day-to-day matters. Many companies have adopted separating the roles of chair and CEO, citing this move as a means to enhance corporate governance. The duties of a non-executive chair typically revolve around board activities, such as setting agendas, reviewing performance, and presiding over meetings. While opinions on the preferred model (American or British) are divided, some companies have implemented measures to ensure an independent perspective, like having a lead independent director. The role of the chair in private equity-backed boards differs significantly from those in non-profit or publicly listed organizations. Expert consensus is still evolving, with some advocating for executive chairs to have a lead independent director. Companies with both an executive chair and CEO often include prominent institutions such as Oracle, HSBC, and AOL Time Warner. Vice-chair and deputy chair roles in organizations like HSBC, Alphabet Inc., and HP have a vice- or deputy chair who assists the chairperson and can act as chair when necessary. In some cases, a group may elect a temporary chair pro tempore to fill the role for a single meeting. The title of deputy chair often has more seniority than vice-chair, especially if there are multiple vice-chairs but only one deputy chair. However, this type of deputy chair title usually does not have an operational role and is advisory instead. There's also an unrelated definition of vice- and deputy chairs that refers to executives with higher ranking or more seniority than executive vice-presidents. Different organizations use the terms in various ways, and the Cambridge Dictionary explains that "chairing" means presiding over a meeting or discussion. The controversy over sexist language in English has led to the creation of neutral terms that replace generic male words with more inclusive ones. According to critics, using terms like "policeman" and "chairman" can perpetuate sexism, so guides have been published suggesting replacements such as "police officer" and "chairperson." However, some argue that simply changing individual words is not enough to eradicate sexism in language. They contend that women require a broader range of words, including more positive ones, rather than fewer options. Attempts to modify sexist words have shown mixed results, with some success but also evidence that this alone may not be sufficient to reduce sexism. Furthermore, there is growing opposition to the use of -man suffixes in job titles, such as "postman" and "chairman," due to their perceived masculine connotations. In response, neutral terms like "postal worker" or "spokesperson" are increasingly being used instead. As a result, language that includes both men and women equally is becoming more important, with words like "assistant" or "person" replacing -man or -woman suffixes in job titles. This shift towards neutrality has become widespread in various forms of English writing, including newspapers, television, radio, and official documents. To avoid giving the impression that the person referred to is necessarily male, chairperson or simply "chair" are often preferred over chairman, reflecting a broader trend towards more inclusive language that emerged from a desire to avoid perpetuating masculine dominance since the 1960s. Chairperson is a term that has sparked controversy among many people due to its perceived sexist connotations when applied to women. However, in standard usage and writing, chairperson is widely accepted as a neutral and inclusive title. Many people prefer to use the terms "chair" or simply omit the title altogether, as they believe it can give the impression that the position is only held by men. In reality, both men and women can hold the role of chair, and the term is often used in formal and informal settings alike. Some argue that the suffix "-man" inherently excludes females, which can make titles like chairman seem inappropriate for women. On the other hand, others see it as a neutral convention that does not necessarily carry gender-specific connotations. In general, using "chair" or "chairperson" can be a safe choice to avoid any potential offense, while still conveying the necessary information about the individual's role. A Creative Commons license allows for sharing and adapting the material under certain conditions. Share the content freely, but give credit and indicate any changes made. The license doesn't restrict others from using the material as long as they follow its terms.

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