

Inclusive Style Guide: The Gender Equality Edition

Inequality is partly ingrained in the way we use language. The words you choose and the way you use them don't just reflect your view of the world but also influence how others see it. How can you communicate in a way that's truly inclusive and equal for people of all genders? Find out in this Inclusive Style Guide: The Gender Equality Edition!

*In this guide, we're all about **gender equality**. We know that gender is just one of many factors people use to stereotype, exclude, and discriminate—others include age, background, physical and mental health, and more.*

Want to make sure your language is respectful, inclusive, and empowering?
Follow these four simple guidelines:

- **Spot and challenge stereotypes.** Don't let outdated clichés sneak into your language. Be aware of assumptions and choose words that celebrate diversity, not limit it.
- **Be inclusive—everyone deserves to be seen.** Language has the power to make people feel valued or, on the other hand, invisible. Choose words that embrace different identities, backgrounds, and experiences.
- **Show respect—words carry weight.** Avoid wording that downplays, trivialises, or puts people in a lower position. Respect is key to stronger, more meaningful communication.
- **Involve the people you talk about.** Want to get it right? Listen, learn, and engage with the people you're referring to. Their perspectives matter—so let them guide the conversation!



What does inclusive language look like in action – and what should you try to avoid?

Use a neutral greeting

Skip gendered openings like "*Ladies and gentlemen*"—go for **neutral terms** that include everyone.

✗ "*Dear Sir/Madam,*"

✓ "*Dear reader,*" or "*Welcome, everyone!*"

Stay consistent with names and titles

Women are more often called by their first name, while men are called by their last name. Use the **same approach** for all genders, ages, and backgrounds—whether they're interns or directors.

✗ "*Meet our CEO, Mr. Smith, and our marketing assistant, Lisa.*"

✓ "*Meet our CEO, Tom Smith, and our marketing assistant, Lisa Thorn.*"

Acknowledge all family types without assumptions.

Recognise diverse family structures and go for neutral terms that include everyone.

✗ "*Bring your mom and dad to the event!*"

✓ "*Bring your parents or guardians to the event!*"

Make job postings inclusive

Be clear that **everyone is welcome** by using **(x/f/m)** instead of just (f/m) – or simply avoid specifying gender altogether.

✗ "*Looking for a new colleague (m/f).*"

✓ "*Looking for a new colleague (x/f/m).*"

Ditch gendered job titles

Choose **neutral job titles** that focus on skills, not gender.

✗ "*Fireman*" / "*Chairman*"

✓ "*Firefighter*" / "*Chairperson*"

Avoid unnecessary gender labels

Ask yourself: **Is this relevant information?** If not, leave it out.

✗ "*The female minister*" or "*The transgender director*"

✓ "*The minister*" or "*The director*"



Avoid "Othering"

Framing someone as "different" without specifying different from whom reinforces the idea of a "norm" versus an "exception."

✗ "This program also supports people with a different gender identity."

✓ "This program supports people of all gender identities."

Skip irrelevant personal details

Relationship status doesn't define someone's achievements.

✗ "Single mom Patricia got promoted."

✓ "Patricia got promoted."

Use adjectives, not labels

No one is their gender identity or sexuality—it's just part of who they are.

✗ "A trans" / "A gay"

✓ "A trans person" / "A gay man"

Name the perpetrator

Too often, texts focus on the victim while the perpetrator fades into the background—leading to **victim-blaming**.

✗ "Woman was assaulted."

✓ "Man assaulted a woman."

Small changes, big impact! By choosing your words wisely, you help create a world where everyone feels seen, valued, and included.

Sources:

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