



How to Avoid Sexist Language in Writing

“Unless you’re writing in a debate about sexism, you’ll probably want a style that, on the one hand, no reasonable person could call sexist and, on the other hand, never suggests that you’re contorting your language to be nonsexist.” –Bryan Garner, *Garner’s Modern American Usage* (2009)

Simple strategies for a cogent, non-sexist writing style:

Change the pronoun to an article:

A lawyer is restricted in sharing information regarding his [change to a] client due to attorney-client privilege.

Pluralize so that he becomes they:

An overcommitted student often finds himself stressed. [Could read: Overcommitted students often find themselves stressed.]

Use reasonable alternatives to words that assume male subjects:

Awkward writing can easily replace offensive writing. In situations where there is a word that wrongly assumes masculinity such as fireman, look for smooth solutions: firefighter, police officer, mail carrier, are good alternatives to fireman, policeman, and mailman.

Use with caution:

The he/she solution can be cumbersome. [e.g., When studying, a student should ensure that he/she can find an environment that does not distract him/her from his/her work.]

Alternative, gender-neutral pronouns such as tey, co, and ze have not received widespread acceptance in the academic community. Similarly, using the gender-neutral, singular they [If we find another student, they could help us] is not fully accepted in formal writing. Consequently, consulting a professor before using these pronouns is advised.

For a helpful chart and further discussion of this issue, follow this link: goo.gl/eK2C8i

Sometimes, you may need to rework the entire sentence structure to avoid sexist language. In these cases, do not give up. Writing without sexist language is sometimes difficult but always worthwhile.

