

Inclusive Language Handbook

A Practical Guide to Using
Inclusive Language

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in·clusive

including everything,
everyone

lan·guage

the body of words used
by a people to communicate
among themselves

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Foreword

The *Inclusive Language Handbook* by Don Thorsen and Vickie Becker is published in conjunction with the fourth international Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy Conference (San Antonio, April 23-26, 1998).

The issue of inclusive language often raises concerns on various levels. This booklet provides a theological rationale for the use of inclusive language when talking about people and offers suggestions on incorporating inclusive language in our speaking and writing.

Studies indicate that while language reflects reality, language also has an impact on reality. *Ezer Cenegdo: A Power Like Him Facing Him as Equal* by Joseph Coleson, an earlier booklet published in this series, provided a biblical basis for the equality of women and men through an examination of Genesis 1 and 2. The use of inclusive language communicates the belief that both sexes are created equally in the image of God. Churches and schools have used *Ezer Cenegdo* to stress that men and women are equal in God's sight. Our hope is that this booklet will served as a useful aid in helping people become aware of the need for inclusive language and for implementing it in their communication.

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A Matter of Conscience

Many of us can no longer remember the first time we heard the term *inclusive language*. Perhaps it was at school, work, or church. But the introduction of inclusive language has changed the way we speak and think.

Too often inclusive language is pejoratively relegated to the realm of *political correctness*. This is unfortunate because political correctness can serve as a catch-all phrase that discusses social justice, multiculturalism, globalism, gender equity, and inclusive language as petty issues that are culturally relative, or—simply stated—‘P.C.’

But we believe that inclusive language is a matter of conscience because the words we choose to use have a tremendous impact upon treating one another with mutual respect. It is not merely a matter of political correctness to consider seriously how our language can serve to include everyone or exclude them, perhaps even trivializing or discriminating against them. Thus, responsible phraseology should do all that it can to promote inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness.

The *Inclusive Language Handbook* reflects our concern to provide people with a simple rationale and guidelines—with bibliographical sources—for gaining a greater understanding of the importance and use of inclusive language. We do not consider inclusive language to be a culturally relative issue. All people are inherently worthy of consideration in our use of language. It is unjust to exclude or discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, race, culture, nationality or religion.

The handbook draws upon the work of numerous people who have contributed to the growing awareness and use of language that does not discriminate based upon gender, race, culture, nationality, or religion. Special thanks go to Lisa Gebhardt, who assisted us in doing background research for the handbook, and to the many administrators and faculty at Azusa Pacific University who allowed themselves to be quoted. We also thank colleagues and students who gave us valuable input toward editing the final version.

It is our hope that the handbook will be of help to those interested in using language that includes everyone rather than excludes anyone.

Don Thorsen
Vickie Becker

Everything You Wanted to Know About Inclusive Language

What is inclusive language?

Basically, inclusive language represents communication by words, phrases and concepts that signify *both* men and women. It avoids the use of language that is increasingly viewed as male-linked such as *man*, *men* and *mankind* when referring to women and men. Inclusive language selects words like *person*, *people*, *humanity*, and *humankind* so as not to stereotype men or women or exclude either gender from the discussion.

Our words can be used to divide, separate, and exclude,
or they can welcome, include and support.

Jon Wallace

Inclusive language also refers to the intent of not using any words, phrases and concepts that stereotype or discriminate against someone because of race, culture, nationality or religion as well as gender. The intentionality aspect of inclusive language is important because it represents a conscious effort to be non-discriminatory in every sense of the term.

Why should we use inclusive language?

The most basic reason for using inclusive language is that it is more precise. When you speak and write inclusively you are communicating with a greater degree of accuracy, which provides a more effective means for conveying your thoughts.

It is true that some people may realize that your references to *men* could refer to either males and females, but the clearest meaning of *men* refers specifically to the male gender. So, in order to avoid the possibility of confusion and communicate with a greater degree of accuracy, references to both women and men should be done with generic terms such as *people* or *humanity*.

Another reason for using inclusive language is that it displays a sensitivity to the possibility of well intentioned “exclusive” words causing someone to feel less important or marginalized. You may know that you intended to include all people when you selected a certain term or phrase, but the precise meaning of your language may have excluded a whole group of people. Remember the simple adage, ‘communication is not just what is said but what is heard’.

If we are prejudiced and deny that we are, then our efforts to communicate to others and about others without bias will be in vain. For at the base of all communication is our regard for others. Certainly, using inclusive terminology in our speech and writing is a start in the right direction, but without examining our deeper regard for others, we will be paddling shallowly without changing our course.

Beverly Hardcastle Stanford

Who should use inclusive language?

Possibly you are reading this handbook because you are merely investigating the issue of inclusive language. Or, you may be one who finds validity to the arguments in favor of using inclusive language and you are attempting to integrate its use into your vocabulary. Of course there may be some in a third category. You may be one who is not at all convinced or even really interested in inclusive language, but you know that in order to communicate today--with relevance--you need to change the way you refer to men and women.

So, back to the question, who should use inclusive language? Everyone. Increasingly, inclusive language is becoming normative for society. People are more aware that to use male-linked language is to speak a way that does not keep pace with our current form of communicating. Male-linked language will soon become archaic and as awkward as the use of *thee* and *thou* in the English language.

When and where should we use inclusive language?

Just as it was said that everyone should use inclusive language, inclusive language should be used at all times. Such usage

should not be considered something only to be used in public or private. It should permeate your thoughts along with your language.

Make the use of inclusive language a habit. Already some academic institutions, as well as other professions and public agencies, are requiring that people be sensitive to diversity. Since inclusive language reflects issues of a concern for diversity, it is possible that failure to use inclusive language could put you at a disadvantage.

How should we write in an inclusive way?

The purpose of this handbook on inclusive language is to introduce the topic and then teach people how to communicate it effectively. Writing, speaking, and eventually thinking inclusively may require changing certain ways you previously communicated, but the effort will be well worth it.

The following section provides a brief rationale for why Christians should use inclusive language. After that, the handbook will provide user friendly guidelines for writing inclusively. Although the handbook deals primarily with inclusive references to women and men, suggestions will also be given for making language non-discriminatory in relationship to all people regardless of gender, race, culture, nationality or religion.

Words not only describe reality, they create reality. Throughout history, words have launched crusades,
--

wooded lovers, sent people to prison, and fired the fuels of revolution. As we increasingly discover how a simple word can define and shape both who we are and who we want to be, the task of structuring our language in the service of the common good is imperative.

Bryan Stone

Should Christians Use Inclusive Language?

Christians often debate the validity of using inclusive language. This debate is healthy. It allows Christians to understand the issues involved, consider different viewpoints, and then decide for themselves.

In addition to teaching people how to use inclusive language, this handbook offers a brief rationale for why Christians should use it. If one is interested in more extensive discussions on the subject, the bibliography lists several lengthier treatments of inclusive language that can be consulted.

Our concern is to promote the use of inclusive language in reference to men and women. There are related issues, which extend far beyond the scope of this handbook. For example, there is the issue of inclusive language translations of scripture. There is also the issue of inclusive language in reference to God. Such issues will not be addressed in this handbook. Again, resource material on these subjects may be found in the bibliography.

Finally, we will discuss the use of inclusive language in Christian worship. If one decides to use inclusive language, then how can it be incorporated into worship when so many of the songs, liturgy, and—indeed—scripture itself are not inclusive? We will offer several suggestions for incorporating inclusive language into Christian worship.

Why Christians Should Use Inclusive Language

In advocating why Christians should use inclusive language, we first appeal to what scripture has to say. Although the topic is not explicitly addressed, we think that scripture provides a number of principles that are applicable in the support of inclusive language. Such principles make sense particularly in light of historic and contemporary language usage. It is our intent to provide coherent and persuasive reasons for why Christians should use inclusive language today.

Language is the primary means of shaping culture and giving value, especially to groups of people and individuals. It is imperative, therefore, that one's language be accurate in reflecting and communicating what is actually intended.

Robin Smith

You may not consider some of the following reasons sufficient for using inclusive language. Indeed you may completely

reject one or more of them. However, we believe that the following reasons—taken as a whole—contribute to a persuasive rationale for why Christians should use inclusive language.

Consider the following nine reasons

1. **Love:** Scripture teaches “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31; see also Matthew 19:19, 23:39; Luke 10:27). It also teaches the ‘golden rule’: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12; see also Luke 6:31). The use of inclusive language enables a broader expression of love toward others because it seeks to embrace as many people as possible. Since male exclusive language can be alienating, we should seriously consider making our language more inclusive. As an act of love we should use words that promote rather than discourage mutual respect and understanding.
2. **Justice:** Scripture teaches the equal worth of all people, which was established by the creation of both men and women in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and affirmed among those who are one in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28). Our language needs to affirm equal worth in a just way, regardless of the extent to which one thinks equality should exist between women and men. We need to be as concerned about the just use of our language as we are concerned about other kinds of justice. See Romans 13:7, with regard to rendering to people their due in respect to tribute, custom, fear, and honor; see also Psalm 82:3, Proverbs 21:3, and Colossians 4:1.
3. **Reconciliation:** Injustices have occurred due to the insensitive use of male exclusive language, which has contributed to the marginalization and, in some instances, oppression of women. For the sake of reconciling ourselves to one another, we should use inclusive language as a means of facilitating

reconciliation. See Matthew 5:23-24; and 1 Corinthians 5:18.

4. ***Sensitivity.*** Avoid doing that which offends another person's conscience. In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul states that Christians have a great deal of liberty in life. But in areas not essential to the gospel, we should be willing to adjust our words and actions in order to avoid offending the consciences of those who do not share our opinions.

5. ***Adaptability.*** Paul's great missiological mandate of 1 Corinthians 9 challenges us to adapt in order to win others to the gospel message of Jesus Christ. He said: "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22b). Although not all people today use inclusive language, it represents the current trajectory of language. We should be willing to adapt our language in order to be more relevant and persuasive. Just as "thees" and "thous" eventually made their way out of common usage, so should our use of male exclusive language.

What is inclusive language? To include all people in your audience. To exclude anyone in your audience is for you to sabotage the purpose of your communication with them. If your purpose is to be an effective, caring, just person, that is to have an open heart, then, open your words as well.

Sharon Pearson

6. ***Permissibility.*** We have great liberty in how we communicate biblical truths. Certainly, scripture warns against the changing of scripture (see Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; and Revelation 22:19). But the variety of translations and

paraphrases of scripture gives witness to the ongoing liberty Christians exercise in making the gospel message more understandable.

7. ***Biblical Precedent.*** Paul inclusively restates the words of the psalmist in his letter to the Romans. Psalm 32:1 speaks of the blessings of forgiveness in reference to an *individual person* (masculine singular passive participle). Yet in Romans 4:7, Paul says: “Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven.” Here Paul uses plural participles. Although we cannot be sure of Paul’s reason for this change, his rewording of Psalm 32:1 in the plural had the result of making the meaning of the verse more inclusive in communicating to the Romans.
8. ***Nature of Language.*** In scripture, language is instrumental rather than essential; the communication of meaning is more important than the communication of specific words. New Testament authors, for example, wrote in *koine* Greek rather than Hebrew or even classic Attic Greek in order to communicate more effectively to the average person. Language is not static; its use and meaning continually change in relationship to the particular context in which it is used. Today the use of inclusive language makes communication clearer.
9. ***Community.*** The use of plurals rather than the singular “he” (a common technique in making language inclusive) does not diminish the importance of the individual in Christianity. Its use actually helps us to remember the important communal dimension of religious belief, which our contemporary individualism often overlooks. Individuals are indeed responsible before God, but individuals do not respond to God apart from a communal and, hopefully, church context.

Worshipping in Inclusive Ways

Christian worship represents a matter of the heart and mind more than it represents outward acts of singing and liturgy. To be sure, singing and liturgy—any written materials used in the aid of worship—help to facilitate a sense of worship. But they represent means to an end; songs and liturgy are means to worship rather than an end in themselves.

If one is convinced that inclusive language should be used in worship contexts, then how does one get around the largely non-inclusive language used in existing songs and liturgy? Each of the following suggestions represent incremental ways of incorporating inclusive language into worship. The suggestions may be viewed as sequential; your congregation may progress from one approach of worship to another. But each suggestion represents a distinctive way of incorporating inclusive language into worship, which need not progress further.

The most important thing about each suggestion is the teaching and modeling that needs to be present on the part of church leadership, particularly the senior pastor. No changes promoting inclusive language will be effective without the consensual leadership of a church.

Consider the following three options

First Option

Worship leaders can use inclusive language in their public speaking without having to change the words of existing

songs or liturgy. No changes need to be made in them so long as leaders teach and model the importance of using inclusive language in their own speech and writing.

Language is powerful, and inclusive language makes a statement to all that everyone is important and included. We shortchange ourselves and our communities if we exclude anyone.

Rebecca Knippelmeyer

Workshops or other teaching opportunities within a church can be devised for the purpose of instructing people about the importance of inclusive language and how it can be incorporated into their own lives. One should never minimize, however, the importance of working closely and personally with members of a congregation when dealing with such a sensitive subject.

Second Option

When the concern for using inclusive language grows in a congregation, worship services can be modified to use an increased amount of songs and liturgy that avoid male exclusive language. It is generally easier for a congregation to adjust to new songs and liturgy than to modify existing ones, which often evoke strong emotional connections for people. More and more songs and liturgy are available that use inclusive language. Even scripture is available in inclusive language translations. (See the bibliography.)

The increased use of contemporary songs and liturgy inevitably results in the decreased use of familiar, traditional songs and liturgy. Church leaders need to be aware of the stress

these changes may cause within the congregation. Ongoing evaluations need to occur in order to assess the benefits and liabilities of changes that are made.

One of the ways of showing compassion is being sensitive to the feelings of other human beings. Let's not contribute to the marginalization of others by our careless and inappropriate use of words.

David Bicker

Of course, there always needs to be teaching and modeling by leaders in order to promote congregational appreciation for the use of inclusive language. One would do well to avoid, however, making a point over the use of inclusive language during situations that already evoke strong emotions, for example, at funerals, weddings, and so on.

Third Option

Sometimes the availability of inclusive language songs and liturgy is deemed insufficient for all the worship needs of a congregation. If that congregation is very intentional about the use of inclusive language, then liberty may be taken to modify existing songs and liturgy in inclusive ways.

The process of editing existing songs and liturgy may prove to be a difficult and tedious job. Yet the editing of songs and liturgy is often done for other reasons, for example, due to limitations of time or other resources in a congregational worship service. Editing can be done in ways that are tasteful as well as faithful to the original songs and liturgy.

Care needs to be taken, however, not to break copyright laws. Authors of music and liturgy have legal rights to their work for a limited time. Unless something is in the public domain, changes cannot legally be made without written permission from a

copyright owner. Resources that were written long ago, for example, some hymns, now are considered to be in the public domain.

Final Thoughts on Worship

Let us recall the words of the 17th century Protestant pastor Meldinius: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” Some Christians today would say that the use of inclusive language—inside as well as outside worship—represents a non-essential rather than essential aspect of the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Thus we should allow liberty to those who have strong opinions about its use or disuse.

We have all heard the phrase, “Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words can never hurt me.” Whoever coined this phrase obviously had a very particular situation in mind because words can be terribly hurtful. Words—especially carelessly spoken words—can be hurtful personally, socially and professionally. So it is important to adapt our words and phrases in ways that help to include and encourage people rather than exclude and discourage them.

Don Thorsen

For those, however, who consider a rejection of inclusive language to be essential, all we can ask is that you at least be charitable to those of us who are convinced otherwise. Although inclusive language is not necessarily essential to the gospel, it contributes to churches in ways that make worship more relevant to *everyone* in the congregation.

A User Friendly Guide to Inclusive Language

Begin at the beginning~~using gender neutral terms

The use of gender neutral terms represents one of the most important first steps when writing in an inclusive way. Gender neutral terms represent words or phrases that have a wide or general application, rather than being too specific. For example, the use of such terms as *man* and *mankind* are increasingly viewed as specific references to male individuals. The terms *humanity*, *humankind*, and *people* convey more general meaning.

In today's rapidly changing world it is important that the language which we use to communicate appropriately recognizes gender.

Terry Franson

Let us turn to the task of how to use inclusive language. At first glance the task seems daunting, but with a little guidance you will discover that its use is quite easy. Soon you will realize how awkward it sounds to not use inclusive language!

The road to inclusive language

• How to use pronouns

Use of the pronouns “*he*,” “*him*” or “*his*” is considered exclusive in reference to someone who might be female. For example, the following sentence assumes that the ‘average student’ is male: “The average student is nervous when *he* begins a new class.” We should try to write in ways that promote rather than discourage a sense of inclusiveness.

Here are nine things to consider

1. Use the plural

Exclusivity may be avoided by writing sentences in the plural. You should be sure, however, that use of the plural does not affect the original meaning of a sentence. Here are several examples of how to recast sentences in the plural:

Singular

The average student is nervous when *he* begins a new class.

Everyone in college must eventually declare *his* major.

Plural

Average students are nervous when *they* begin a new class.

Students in college must eventually declare *their* major.

2. Omit pronouns

An alternative is to omit the pronoun, changing the masculine pronoun to a neutral determiner. For example, compare the following sentences:

The average student is nervous when *he* begins a new class.

The average student becomes nervous at the beginning of a new class.

3. Use formal style

Exclusivity may also be avoided by replacing the masculine pronoun with *one* or *one's*. For example: "The average student is nervous when *one* begins a new class." This example represents a more formal style of writing, but it is acceptable as an alternative.

4. Use compound words

It is grammatically acceptable to use compound words such as *he or she* and *s/he*. For example: "The average student is nervous when *he or she* begins a new class" or "The average student is nervous when *s/he* begins a new class." The first

example is more commonly accepted, whereas the second example is more commonly rejected. Both represent a more cumbersome grammatical style of writing that distracts readers from the content of a paragraph or essay, especially if they are repeatedly used. Stylistically it is preferable to avoid the use of such compound words.

Each of us desires a genuine feeling of belonging. Using inclusive verbal and written language helps us remove possible feelings of exclusion or being ignored.

AJ Anglin

5. Use articles in place of pronouns

You can avoid the use of some male-linked pronouns by substituting articles. For example, compare the following sentences:

A student is expected to do *his* homework assignment.

A student is expected to do *the* homework assignment.

6. Repeat nouns

Sometimes pronouns can be avoided by repeating a noun. For example, notice how the subject of the following two sentences is repeated:

A student is expected to do the homework assignment. *A student* is also expected to come to class on time.

This approach may sound a bit awkward to readers, so you should beware of using it too often.

Our words should unify rather than divide. Any behaviors that discourage people from participating fully in the academic experience should be identified with suggested remedies such as inclusive language. I am reminded that lady Montague said, "Civility costs nothing and buys everything."

Patricia Anderson

7. Use the passive voice

Another way to avoid exclusivity is by using the passive voice when the omission of a pronoun or the use of a neutral determiner is awkward or impossible. For example, compare the following sentences:

He must take special care in preparing for new classes.

Special care must be taken in preparing for new classes.

8. Use specific examples

We can avoid exclusivity by identifying a specific person. For example: "John, who is an average student, is nervous when he begins a new class." This will help you to avoid vague references to an unidentified *he* or *she* and *her* or *him*. When specific examples are chosen, however, we should try to alternate evenly between male and female individuals.

9. Do not change quotes

Do not change the wording of quotations, particularly from published sources. Allow people to speak for themselves, whether your sources are contemporary or ancient. Use [sic] if you want to clarify to readers that you did not change male-linked words or phrases in a quotation.

“Hear it, see it, do it,” is a valuable learning model. As this three-step model is applied to inclusive language, we not only enhance our communication but also our civility.

Vickie Becker

• How to use nouns

The most important thing to remember is to avoid stereotyping. Nouns should not unnecessarily identify someone's gender with a job or role. For example: use *police officer* instead of *policeman*, and use *homemaker* instead of *housewife*.

May we suggest some alternatives

Most nouns are fairly easy to change; others are not so easy. For example, how should we refer to a *manhole* cover? Alternatives include *utility cover* or *sewer access*, but these terms may not be commonly recognized. Here is a brief list of male-linked terms and alternatives:

businessman
chairman

businessperson, business leader
chair, chairperson

churchman	churchperson, church member
committeeman	committee member
everyman	common person, typical person
freshman	first-year student, frosh
layman	layperson, laity, nonspecialist
manhandle	mistreat, rough up
man, mankind	humankind, humanity
manmade	handmade, artificial, synthetic
man-to-man	one-to-one, person-to-person
men working	workers
penmanship	writing, handwriting
spokesman	spokesperson, speaker
stewardess	attendant, flight attendant
waitress	server, food server
workman	worker
workmanship	work, handiwork, artisanry

And more alternatives

For a more complete list of alternatives you should consult the list of reference works in the bibliography. There you can find more extensive lists of alternative nouns as well as more extensive treatments of inclusive language.

Inclusive language helps us build greater accountability with one another in community. It enhances communication by avoiding unnecessary confusion in the words we use.

Les Blank

• How to address people

We should refer to women with the same respect that we do for men, and vice versa. So, for example, do not use the word *woman* as an adjective. Just as we would not write of a *man teacher*, we should not write of a *woman teacher*. How we address people is as much a matter of personal respect as it is of writing style.

Five things to remember when addressing people

1. Parallel references

You should refer to both men and women in parallel ways. For example, a newly married couple should not be referred to as *man and wife* but as *husband and wife*. Likewise, two doctors from the same medical office should be referred to as Dr. Martinez and Dr. Smith, and not Dr. Martinez and Mrs. Smith.

2. Common references

Some women find it condescending to be called *ladies* or *girls*, particularly when being addressed by men. Instead they would prefer to be called *women*.

The problem today is that so much of the bias in our communication is outside our awareness. We may feel confident that we are staunch believers in equity but be perpetuating inequities through subtle habits in our communication behavior.

Beverly Hardcastle Stanford

3. General titles

With regard to when to use *Miss*, *Mrs.*, *Ms.*, and other titles, you should consult with those you are addressing. When a preference is not known, then you should use the more neutral term *Ms.*, since it does not indicate marital status. Sometimes it is best to avoid titles altogether in references to women and men.

4. Addressing letters

Use appropriate titles when addressing people, including professional titles, for example, Dr., President, and so on. When the gender of a person or persons is not known, then use a generic greetings. For example, you could say 'Greetings' or 'To whom it may concern'. Although the latter phrase may seem impersonal, the former phrase provides an engaging alternative.

5. Feminine suffixes

The use of feminine suffixes such as *-e*, *-ess*, and *-ette* can suggest that a female represents a derivative or inferior variation of the original. For example, we refer to the great *poets* (males and females) of history as including *poets* (males) and *poetesses* (females). Thus it would be preferable to refer to both male and female poets as 'poets' rather than 'poets' and 'poetesses'. The same could be said for a divorce(-*e*), fiancé(-*e*), host(-*ess*), prophet(-*ess*), steward(-*ess*), usher(-*ette*), and so on.

The use of inclusive language offers an appropriate means

of responding positively to our legacy of democracy. It is a practice that recognizes differences without constructing barriers.

William Yarchin

The use of feminine suffixes, however, is not uniform even among those who promote the use of inclusive language. For example, some would also want to argue that the preservation of terms such as *actress* add more to the cause of women than is risked for the sake of gender accuracy. Since inclusive language is not an exact science but a developing form of language, we should avoid dogmatism in promoting it.

Sometimes there appear to be no accepted substitutes for specific titles. For example, there are no alternatives for referring to members of royalty from other countries such as a 'Princess' or 'Countess'. For a more complete list of specific titles you should consult the list of reference works in the bibliography.

• How to communicate ideas in an inclusive way

Since language is a reflection of how we think, we should be concerned about the ways we think as well as the ways we speak and write. Our thoughts have consequences, so we should be concerned about bringing all of our ideas into conformity with inclusive ways of thinking. Thinking inclusively may be our greatest challenge.

We use a number of ideas that include what may be called concepts, images, illustrations, anecdotes and humor in order to

communicate with one another. They often represent the most dynamic part of our communication! In using them we should think critically in order to use ideas that reflect mutual respect.

Eight Suggestions for communicating inclusive ideas

1. Avoid stereotyping

Avoid gender stereotyping, which ascribes to a certain gender a conventional notion or conception that does not allow for the consideration of individuals. For example, do not suggest that everyone who watches football games are men, and do not suggest that everyone who sews are women. Even if a group or activity is dominated by a specific gender, we should not assume that individuals of the other sex are neither interested nor involved with it.

2. Do not typecast gender differences

A common way of stereotyping men and women is, for example, to describe men as strong, assertive, and courageous and women as weak, passive, and nurturing. These characteristics, while true in some instances, should not be considered universally applicable to an entire gender. In writing we should avoid the tendency to caricature women and men in certain ways.

3. Avoid reductionism

Sometimes people become reductionistic in how they view

men and women. It is too easy to say, for example, that something is a man's problem or a woman's problem. But the truth of the matter is that women and men mostly share the same problems. Reducing discussion to a single gender prevents thorough and critical consideration of particular issues.

4. Do not omit genders

Do not omit either men or women from what is written. For example, when announcing a job opening stereotypically thought to be a man's job (for example, police, firefighter, engineer), do not refer only to men in the announcement. Likewise, when announcing a job opening stereotypically thought to be a woman's job (for example, secretary, nurse, flight attendant), do not refer only to women in the announcement. The above images are false because people from both genders perform all of the above jobs. So the use of inclusive language in job announcements would help to encourage the fair treatment of both women and men.

5. Alternate examples

When giving examples or illustrations, we should try to balance the number of references to men and women, and girls and boys. Although a complete balance may not always be possible, we should make it a goal when formulating examples and illustrations for our writing.

6. Use equality in examples

Equality in the quantity of examples and illustrations dedicated to women and men will not help if the quality of

references are unequal. For example, do not use men as examples in positive situations, and women as negative examples elsewhere. Seek balance in both the quantity and quality of examples and illustrations used in writing.

7. Avoid feminine pronouns for neutral nouns

Many women find it condescending when referring to nouns of neutral gender as a *she* or *her*. For example, we should not refer to a car, plane or ship as a *her*. Instead refer to such entities as an *it*.

Inclusive language is an issue about change. It is not an issue to divide or call to confusion. It is a way to humanize the individual person while clearly communicating a thought.

Lawrence Witherspoon

8. Be wise in your use of humor

Humor represents one of the most refreshing aspects of written communication, but it can also represent one of the most damaging. Humor arouses amusement and even laughter through the use of burlesque, farce, parody, satire, and so on. We should take care to evaluate the humor we use so that it does not demean the subjects mentioned. For example, we should avoid humor that demeans the way a woman looks, thinks, or acts.

9. Avoid offensive slang

We often use slang terms in our speech--terms that reflect humorous gender stereotypes. Although slang represents a rich part of the development of our language, its use can be offensive. So we should avoid the use of offensive terms in reference to both men and

women. With regard to women, we should avoid the use of such slang terms as bag, bitch, broad, chick, dog face, dumb blonde, floozy, loose woman, old wives tales, and so on.

Some people say that if they're using "mankind" to mean everyone, then people should just understand and accept their usage. It reminds me of a conversation between Humpty Dumpty and Alice after she went through the looking glass. Humpty Dumpty says, "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less." The trouble is that if we act like Humpty Dumpty, we're not going to be talking about the same thing. Inclusive language is a way to make sure that all of us feel as though we are part of the issue being discussed.

Roxane Lulofs

Two principles that guide the use of inclusive language

In "Using Language That Is Fair to Both Sexes," Alleen Pace Nilsen provides two principles that guide the use of inclusive language in ways that are fair to both sexes. They are:

1. Use inclusive language so as not to ignore one sex or imply that all members of particular groups belong to the same sex. Even when groups are predominantly made up of members of one sex, leave the door open for participation by individuals of the other sex.

2. Treat people as individuals rather than ascribing to them characteristics based on sex-role stereotyping. When writing about males and females engaged in similar activities, treat subjects equally.

Some Final Thoughts About Nondiscriminatory Language

People have long been sensitive to discriminatory language used against other people because of their race, culture, nationality or religion. Occasionally one will hear a demeaning term used that labels an individual, and, of course, this is as unjust as any other stereotyping.

The final purpose of inclusive language is to be nondiscriminatory toward all people, not just women. The very word *inclusive* means comprehensive or including everyone. A special principle lies at the very heart of inclusive language: *mutual respect*. Mutual respect has regard for the value of all people and for how we relate to them.

Mutual respect requires that we consider carefully how we speak, write and think about others regardless of their gender, race, culture, nationality or religion. Special attention to inclusive language will help build a community free of discriminatory characteristics and filled with mutual respect.

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