



NOVA SOUTHEASTERN  
UNIVERSITY

College of Undergraduate Studies

## Tutoring and Testing Center

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# GENDER-NEUTRAL WRITING

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In an effort to create gender-neutral writing that does not favor one gender over the other, use the following widely used alternatives to the traditional masculine-oriented vocabulary.

### **Generic use of “man”**

Although MAN in its original sense carried the dual meaning of adult human and adult male, its meaning has come to be so closely identified with adult male that the generic use of MAN and other words with masculine markers should be avoided.

#### Examples

mankind  
man's achievements  
man-made  
the common man  
man the stockroom  
nine man-hours

#### Alternatives

humanity, people, human beings  
human achievements  
synthetic, manufactured, machine-made  
the average person, ordinary people  
staff the stockroom  
nine staff-hours

### **Occupations**

Avoid the use of MAN in occupational terms when persons holding the job could be either male or female.

#### Examples

chairman  
businessman  
fireman  
mailman  
steward/stewardess  
policeman/policewoman  
congressman/congresswoman

#### Alternatives

chair  
business executive  
firefighter  
mail carrier  
flight attendant  
police officer  
congressional representative

## Pronouns

Because the English language has no generic singular pronoun, we have used HE, HIS, and HIM in such expressions as "the student needs HIS pencil." However, when we identify "a judge," "a critic," or "an executive" exclusively by the pronoun HE, we subtly condition ourselves against the idea of a female judge, critic, or executive. There are several approaches to limiting the pervasive use of masculine pronouns, thus allowing people of both genders to be fully included in our writing.

### A. Recast into the plural.

#### Example

Give each student his paper as soon as he is finished.

#### Alternative

Give students their papers as soon as they are finished.

### B. Reword.

#### Example

The average student is worried about his grade.

#### Alternative

The average student is worried about grades.

### C. Replace the masculine pronoun with ONE, YOU, or (sparingly) HE OR SHE.

#### Example

If the student is satisfied with his performance on the pretest, he takes the post-test.

#### Alternative

A student who is satisfied with his or her performance on the pretest, takes the post.

### D. Alternate male and female examples and expressions. (Be careful not to confuse the reader.)

#### Example

Let each student participate. Has he had a chance? Could he feel left out?

#### Alternative

Let each student participate. Has *she* had a chance to talk? Could *he* feel left out?

## Indefinite Pronouns

Using masculine pronouns to refer to an indefinite pronoun (everybody, everyone, anybody, anyone) also has the effect of excluding women. In all but strictly formal uses, plural pronouns have become acceptable substitutes for the masculine singular.

#### Example

Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring his money tomorrow.

#### Alternative

Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring their money tomorrow.