

A Guide to Gender-Inclusive Language

Why is this important?

- Gendered language can be awkward.
- Reference to gender can reinforce stereotypes.
- Our identity is connected to our gender.
- Gender-exclusionary language may violate *Bostock v Clayton*, Titles VII & IX, and Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.
- Some people are neither men nor women: **Don't exclude them.**

Key Idea

Gender-neutral language generally involves **simplifying** language:

- “Men or women” becomes “people”.
- “Mothers or fathers” becomes “parents” (or “caregivers”).
- “Boys and girls” becomes “children”.
- “Brothers and sisters” becomes “siblings”.

Replacing he / she with they; him / her with them

- Singular “they” is centuries old.
- All major style guides now support it.
- Less to write; consistent.
- It is now the legal standard, per the ABA House of Delegates, so it's legal for contracts. (*Resolution 106a, adopted 2/22/21*)

Challenges

- There are no *universally accepted* gender-neutral forms of sir/ma'am, niece/nephew, or aunt/uncle.
- The most common gender neutral form of Mr./Ms. is Mx. (“mix”).
- In contracts, be mindful of bereavement & parental leave clauses.