

Overcoming Sexist Language

1. Where you use “Mr.” for a man, use “Ms.” for a woman. Don’t forget: Check to see if the woman prefers “Miss” or “Mrs.”
2. Don’t assume that someone listed by initials is male. If the listing is A.B. Jones, address your letter to “Dear A.B. Jones”.
3. When you refer to professional peers, use the same form of name for all. Use Jim, John, and Jane, not Mr. Smith, Mr. Jones, and Jane.
4. Address a woman by her professional title. Dr. Smith is Dr. Smith regardless of gender. Your Christmas card would be addressed to “Dr. Jane Smith and Mr. William Smith”, or “William and Jane Smith”, but never “Mr. and Mrs. Smith”.
5. Avoid the generic “he” when you mean a man or woman. Don’t say, “Each employee must complete his evaluation.” Instead, use “his or her evaluation,” or “Employees must complete their evaluations.”
6. Find substitutes for “-man” and “-men” words. Instead, try *firefighter*, *mail carrier*, or *business executive*.
7. To avoid overusing “-person,” turn nouns into verbs. Instead of “Sally is the new chairperson of the committee,” say, “Sally chairs the committee.”
8. Don’t use *-ess* to designate a woman. (i.e.- author, not authoress)
9. Avoid the term *girl* as in “the girls in the office.” Ask yourself if you’d use “boy” in a similar situation.

SMART MOVES, Deep and Sussman