

Political Correctness:

Use alternatives to words that are derogatory
in origin and nature

Problem Words	Alternatives
white	Caucasian
black	black, African-
handicapped	person with a disabil-
midget, dwarf	little person
Spanish (if not from Spain)	Hispanic (or specifically: Puerto Rican, Mexican, Latin American, Peruvian, Dominican, etc.)
Aborigine	Indigenous
Eskimo	Inuit
Indian (if not from India)	Native American, American Indian
British	English, Irish, Welsh,
Franco	French
Polock	Polish
Russian (if not from Russia)	Ukrainian, Belaru- sian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Geor- gian, Armenian, Ka- zakhstani, etc.
Yugoslavian	Croatian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Bos- nian, Slovenian
Oriental	Asian (or specifically: Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Korean, etc.)
Canuck	French-Canadian
sexual preference	sexual orientation
homosexual	gay men, lesbian women, bi-sexual, transgender

For more information about language that builds common ground, see *The Everyday Writer* 3rd edition, Section 37 (pages 282-287)



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More mini-lessons can be online

<http://dept.kent.edu/English/WritingCent/mini.htm>

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Kent State University
Writing Center

Language that Builds Common Ground



Mini-Lesson #24

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Treat men and women in parallel manner

Problem Words	Alternatives
The class interviewed Chief Justice Burger and Mrs. O'Connor.	The class interviewed Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justice Sandra O'Connor.
The reading list included Proust, Joyce, Gide and Virginia Woolf.	The reading list included Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf.
Both Bill Smith, a straight-A sophomore, and Kathy Ryan, a pert junior, won writing awards.	Both sophomore Bill Smith and junior Kathy Ryan won writing awards.

Avoid the Generic "He" and "His"

There are several alternatives, including omitting "his" altogether, changing to the plural form, using the passive voice, or changing to "he or she" or "him or her."

Problem Words	Alternatives
The average student is worried about his grades.	The average student is worried about grades.
When the student hands in his paper, read it immediately.	When the student hands in the paper, read it immediately.
Give the student his grade right away.	Give the students their grades right away.
Each student should hand in his paper.	Papers should be handed in.
Each student will do better if he has a voice in the decision.	Each student will do better if he or she has a voice in the decision.

The following is reprinted from "Guidelines for Non-sexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications (Revised, 1985)

Choose Occupational Titles that Avoid Sex-Role Stereotyping

Use the same title for men and women for jobs and positions that can be held by both sexes.

Problem Words	Alternatives
chairman/ chairwoman	chair, coordinator (of a committee or department), moderator (of a meeting), presiding officer, head, chairperson
businessman/ businesswoman	business executive, manager
congressman/ congresswoman	congressional representative
policeman/ policewoman	police officer
salesman/saleswoman	sales clerk, sales representative, salesperson
fireman	fire fighter
waitress	server
stewardess	flight attendant
male nurse	nurse
mother/father	parent
wife/husband	spouse
wife and children	family
career woman	professional
mailman	letter carrier
boys (when not referring to age)	men
ladies/girls (when not referring to age)	women
man-sized job	very big job
old wives' tale	superstition

Sexist Language in Direct Quotation:

Direct quotations cannot be altered, but there are other ways of dealing with this problem.

1. Avoid the quotation altogether if it is not really necessary.
2. Paraphrase the quotation, using a partial quote and substituting nonsexist words as necessary. Be sure to give the original author credit for the idea.

Problem Words	Alternative
Among the questions asked by the school representatives was the following: "Considering the ideal college graduate, what degree of knowledge would you prefer him to have in each of the curricular areas?"	Among the questions asked by the school representatives was one about what degree of knowledge the ideal college graduate should have in each of the curricular areas.

Avoid the Generic "Man"

The problem with "man" is that it refers almost exclusively to adult males.

Problem Words	Alternatives
mankind	humanity, human beings, people
the best man for the job	the best person for the job
The common man	the average person, ordinary people
cavemen	cave dwellers, prehistoric people