

Gender at work

About this activity

Help your learners use gender-inclusive language when discussing jobs.

Stage 1: Lead-in

Start by showing images depicting traditional gender stereotypes in various occupations, such as a female nurse, a male construction worker, male IT assistant, female secretary, female cleaning lady and male fashion model.

Ask learners to share their thoughts on the images and why they think certain jobs might be associated with a particular gender. Encourage discussion and exploration of underlying assumptions and biases.

Facilitate a group discussion on how gendered language and stereotypes can be changed to promote gender balance and inclusivity in all professions.

Ask: how can we make these images more inclusive? How can we stop thinking some jobs are for men and some for women?

Stage 2: Test

In pairs, ask learners to do activity 1 as a way to test their current knowledge of gendered language:

Activity 1

Identify the gendered language in each sentence and attempt to make them more gender-inclusive.

	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="502 394 887 465">Sentence</th> <th data-bbox="887 394 1374 465">Suggested answer</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 465 887 568">The chairman will lead the meeting.</td> <td data-bbox="887 465 1374 568">The chairperson/chair will lead the meeting.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 568 887 672">The salesperson is responsible for meeting the targets.</td> <td data-bbox="887 568 1374 672">The salesperson is responsible for meeting the targets. (no alternative)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 672 887 875">He's a great actor.</td> <td data-bbox="887 672 1374 875">They are a great actor or (performer) <i>NB This is when you do not know the gender.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 875 887 947">The waitress will take your order.</td> <td data-bbox="887 875 1374 947">The server or waiter will take your order.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 947 887 1019">The IT guy fixed the computer.</td> <td data-bbox="887 947 1374 1019">The IT person/clerk fixed the computer.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 1019 887 1122">The office gossip spreads rumours.</td> <td data-bbox="887 1019 1374 1122">The office gossip spreads rumours. (no alternative).</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 1122 887 1225">The receptionist is friendly and helpful.</td> <td data-bbox="887 1122 1374 1225">The receptionist is friendly and helpful. (no alternative).</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 1225 887 1328">A deliveryman will bring your package.</td> <td data-bbox="887 1225 1374 1328">A delivery-person/deliverer will bring your package.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 1328 887 1532">She's a talented singer.</td> <td data-bbox="887 1328 1374 1532">They are a talented singer. <i>NB This is when you do not know the gender.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="502 1532 887 1626">The businessman closed the deal successfully.</td> <td data-bbox="887 1532 1374 1626">The businessperson closed the deal successfully.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sentence	Suggested answer	The chairman will lead the meeting.	The chairperson/chair will lead the meeting.	The salesperson is responsible for meeting the targets.	The salesperson is responsible for meeting the targets. (no alternative)	He's a great actor.	They are a great actor or (performer) <i>NB This is when you do not know the gender.</i>	The waitress will take your order.	The server or waiter will take your order.	The IT guy fixed the computer.	The IT person/clerk fixed the computer.	The office gossip spreads rumours.	The office gossip spreads rumours. (no alternative).	The receptionist is friendly and helpful.	The receptionist is friendly and helpful. (no alternative).	A deliveryman will bring your package.	A delivery-person/deliverer will bring your package.	She's a talented singer.	They are a talented singer. <i>NB This is when you do not know the gender.</i>	The businessman closed the deal successfully.	The businessperson closed the deal successfully.
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Stage 3: Teach	<p>Perform feedback on answers from Activity 1 and discuss alternatives. Elicit other ways to promote gender-balanced language and representation at work. Focus on: pronoun usage (for example, using 'they' or 'their' instead of 'he' or 'she', 'him' or 'her') and job titles. Board some gendered examples and ask the learners for gender-balanced alternatives.</p>																						
Stage 4: Test 2	<p>In pairs, learners do activity 2. Elicit answers when they have finished.</p> <p>Activity 2 Rewrite the sentences below using gender-balanced language.</p>																						

	Sentence	Suggested answer
	Every employee should talk to his supervisor about any issues.	Every employee should talk to their supervisor about any issues.
	The new intern is a quick learner; she'll pick up the skills fast!	The new intern is a quick learner; they'll pick up the skills fast.
	Our office manager is a strong leader; he knows how to get things done.	Our office manager is a strong leader; they know how to get things done.
	The cleaning lady does a great job keeping the office tidy.	The cleaning staff member/cleaner does a great job keeping the office tidy.
	The salesman should maintain a professional appearance at all times.	The salesperson should maintain a professional appearance at all times.
	The computer technician fixed her laptop in no time.	The computer technician fixed their laptop in no time.
	Our receptionist is always smiling and polite.	Our receptionist is always smiling and polite.
	A deliveryman needs to sign the package upon arrival.	A delivery-person needs to sign the package upon arrival.
	The actress gave an outstanding performance in the play.	The actor or the performer gave an outstanding performance in the play.
	The businessman's negotiation skills are exemplary.	The businessperson's negotiation skills are exemplary.
<p>Stage 5: Discussion</p>	<p>Ask the learners to write statements for discussion. For example, saying 'delivery-person' instead of 'deliveryman' means that everyone can do the job. Use one example and ask the learners if they agree/disagree. Then get the learners to share their statements in groups and decide if they agree/disagree. NB Encourage a positive, safe and open environment for discussion where learners are encouraged to express their thoughts and opinions freely. It is crucial to emphasise that all opinions are valid and should be respected.</p> <p>When the learners have finished discussing, perform feedback.</p> <p>NB Actively listen to learners, addressing any concerns or hesitations promptly, and offering additional explanations if needed.</p>	

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