

Gender Neutral Language

This cheat sheet identifies words or phrases you should swap out for more inclusive alternates. The most basic of these is switching gendered pronouns like “he” and “she” for the singular “they.” This is often met with eye-rolls, but Merriam-Webster has deemed the singular “they” as preferable, and the organization has been around since 1828. If it can change, so can you. This chart is not exhaustive, and your team should keep a living document to add to as more problematic terms arise, but this is a solid foundation to kickstart your awareness.

Gender-Neutral Language Cheat Sheet	
Instead of using this	Use this
businessman/businesswoman	business person, business professional
chairman/chairwoman	chair, chairperson
“Don’t get your panties in a bunch.”	“You sound like you may be stressed or feeling overwhelmed; is there anything I can do to help?”
fireman/firewoman	firefighter
he/she, him/her, his/hers	they, them, their
“hey guys”/“how are you guys doing?”	Unless it’s a group of just men, say “hey everyone” or “how are you all doing?”
mailman/mailwoman	mail carrier
“man up”/“are you man enough?”	“Are you up for the challenge?”
mankind	humankind, humanity
manning	staffing
manpower	team, workforce
Mr./Ms./Mrs./Miss	Don’t use them. If you do, default to Mr. or Ms. if you are positive about someone’s desired pronoun.
“nut up or shut up”	“We’ll need all hands on deck for this, do you think you can support?”
policeman/policewoman	police officer
“Put on your big boy/girl pants.”	“Let’s work through this together.”
“right man for the job”	“right person for the job”
salesman	salesperson
steward/stewardess	flight attendant
waiter/waitress	server

Download the comprehensive guide, [How to Be an LGBTQ+ Ally at Work.](#)