

Sexist language

The Craft of Writing · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

You have used sexist language. * Unless you're writing for "lads' mags" like Ralph or FHM, or some old fashioned country weekly, sexist language is OUT. If you use sexist language your editor might consider you out of touch with modern journalistic practice. For instance don't write "woman doctor" as if it's amazing that a woman could be a doctor. There are no heroines anymore; male or female brave people are called just heroes. There are no "man-hours"?it's now work-hours. Do not use "girl" or "boy" if the person is 18 or older - they're simply a woman or a man. A ship or a town is not a "she" but an "it". No longer is there an heiress, poetess or authoress: there is now heir, poet and author, whichever sex. There are still some awards at the Oscars for an "Actress" which is odd because all females in acting now call themselves simply actors. Don't write "businessmen use jet travel" because so do businesswomen, so call them all "executives" or "businesspeople". Housewives are homemakers as are men who stay at home to look after the house and children while the woman works at a paid job. And it's not a stewardess but a flight attendant. And so on. We are in the 21st century, and these old-fashioned terms are out! It's unimportant whether you the journalist personally agrees or disagrees with the new attitude. It's now the commonplace practice: NO sexist words or expressions. If the head of a school refers to herself as "headmistress" then you should respect that. But be sensitive to sexist language because the editor who could buy your articles certainly is . . . Here's some further tips: mankind humanity, people, human beings

man's achievements human achievements

the best man for the job the best person for the job

man-made synthetic, manufactured, machine-made

the common man the average person, ordinary people

man the stockroom staff the stockroom

nine man-hours nine staff-hours

businessman business executive

fireman firefighter

mailman mail carrier

steward/stewardess flight attendant

policeman/policewoman police officer

chairman chair, presiding officer, head

There's now an argument that the "-man" in "chairman" refers to "holder", not man as in a male person. Thus "chairman" means "holder of the chair". The argument is that "chairman" is not a sexist term and the use of "chairwoman" or "chairperson" is sexist.

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