

Office Order No. 002  
Series of 2018

## USE OF GENDER-FAIR LANGUAGE IN ALL CFO COMMUNICATIONS

Pursuant to Section 14, Article II of the 1987 Constitution, the "State recognizes the role of women in nation-building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men."

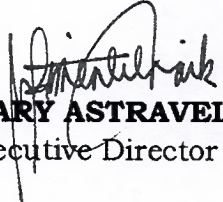
In pursuit of our goal to become a gender-responsive institution, all CFO personnel are hereby directed to **strictly observe the use of non-sexist or gender-fair language in all official documents, communications and issuances** to avoid implicit and explicit discriminatory language against women or men. For this purpose, we shall be guided by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Memorandum Circular No. 12, series of 2005 and Republic Act 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women.

Language shapes thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes and, thus, plays a very crucial role in promoting gender awareness and consciousness. Hence, the need to recognize the importance of transforming language from traditional usage to a more liberating one, that which is gender-sensitive.

Attached are guidelines on the use of non-sexist or gender-fair language as provided for in CSC MC No. 12 (s. 2005) and the *Gender-Fair Language: A Primer* published by the Center for Women's Studies of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

This Office Order takes effect immediately, and supersedes all other previous CFO orders on use of gender-fair language, and may only be modified by valid issuances from the Head of Agency, Chairperson, Executive Director or the CSC.

For strict compliance.

  
**UNDERSECRETARY ASTRAVEL PIMENTEL-NAIK**  
Executive Director

25 May 2018



## GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF NON-SEXIST OR GENDER-FAIR LANGUAGE<sup>1</sup>

Source: CSC MC No. 12 (s. 2005)

1. Eliminate the generic use of HE, HIS, or HIM unless the antecedent is obviously male by:

- a. Using plural nouns

Traditional: The lawyer uses his brief to guide him.

Suggested: The lawyers use **their** briefs to guide **them**.

- b. Deleting HE, HIS, and HIM altogether, rewording if necessary

Traditional: The architect uses his blueprint to guide him.

Suggested: The architect uses the blueprint as a guide.

- c. Substituting articles (a, an, the) for HIS; using WHO instead of HE

Traditional: The writer should know his readers well.

Suggested: The writer should know the readers well.

- d. Using One, We or You

Traditional: As one grows older, he becomes more effective.

Suggested: As one grows older, **one** becomes more effective.

- e. Using the passive voice

Traditional: The manager must submit his proposal today.

Suggested: The proposal must be submitted by the manager today.

2. Eliminate the generic use of Man, instead use People, Person(s), Human(s), Human Being(s), Humankind, Humanity, The Human Race

Traditional: ordinary man, mankind, the brotherhood of man

Suggested: ordinary people, humanity, the human family

3. Eliminate sexism in symbolic representations of gender in words, sentences, and text by:

- a. Taking the context of the word, analyzing its meaning, and eliminating sexism in the concept:

Traditional: feelings of brotherhood, feelings of fraternity

Suggested: feelings of kinship, solidarity

Traditional: the founding father

Suggested: the founders, the founding leaders

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<sup>1</sup> Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 12, series of 2005.

Traditional: the Father of relativity theory

Suggested: the founder of relativity theory, the initiator of relativity theory

- b. Finding precise words to delineate the thing itself from supposedly sex-linked characteristics:

Traditional: Titanic was a great ship, but she rests at the bottom of the sea.

Suggested: Titanic was a great ship, but it now rests at the bottom of the sea.

Traditional: "Don't let Mother Nature rip you off! She's out to kill your car's new finish. Stop her . . ."

Suggested: "Don't let nature rip you off! It's out to kill your car's new finish. Stop it . . ."

4. Eliminate Sexual Stereotyping of Roles by:

- a. Using the same term for both genders when it comes to profession or employment:

Traditional: Salesman, Stewardess

Suggested: Sales agent, Flight attendant

- b. Using gender fair terms in lexical terms

Traditional: Sportsmanship

Suggested: Highest ideals of fair play

- c. Treating men and women in a parallel manner

Traditional: I now pronounce you man and wife.

Suggested: I now pronounce you husband and wife.

- d. Avoiding language that reinforces stereotyping images

Traditional: a man's job, the director's girl Friday

Suggested: a big job, the director's assistant

- e. Avoiding language that catches attention to the sex role of men and women

Traditional: working mothers, spinsters or old maids

Suggested: wage-earning mothers, unmarried women

Traditional: busboys, chauvinist pigs

Suggested: waiter's assistants, male chauvinists

5. Eliminate sexism when addressing persons formally by:

a. Using Ms. instead of Mrs.

Traditional: Mrs. Dela Cruz

Suggested: Ms. dela Cruz

b. Using a married woman's first name instead of her husband's

Traditional: Mrs. Juan dela Cruz

Suggested: Ms. Maria Santos-dela Cruz

c. Using the corresponding titles for females:

Traditional: Dra. Concepcion Reyes

Suggested: Dr. Concepcion Reyes

d. Using the title of the job or group in letters to unknown persons

Traditional: Dear Sir

Suggested: Dear Editor, Dear Credit Manager, Dear Colleagues

### WHAT ARE KINDS OF SEXIST LANGUAGE?<sup>2</sup>

<b>1. Language that excludes women or renders them invisible</b>	<b>The use of generic masculine.</b> Subsuming all humanity in the terms of man, father, brother, master.	
	<i>Current Usage</i>	<i>Alternative</i>
	man	human being, human, person, individual
	mankind, men	human beings, humans, humankind, humanity, people, human race, human species, society, men and women
	working men workmen	workers, wage earners
	man on the street	average person, ordinary person, the common <i>tao</i>
	forefather	ancestor
	layman	layperson, non-specialist, non-professional
	manhood	adulthood, maturity
	manning	staffing, working, running
	to a man	everyone, unanimously, without exception
	one man show	one person show, solo exhibition

<sup>2</sup>Gender-Fair Language: A Primer (Quezon City, UP Center for Women's Studies, 2014), 2-13.

	founding fathers	founders																		
	manpower	human resources, staff personnel, labor force																		
	brotherhood of man	the family of humanity, the unity of people or of human kind, human solidarity																		
	early man	early people, early men and women, early human beings																		
	statesmanship	diplomacy																		
	man-made	manufactured, synthetic, artificial																		
	old masters	classic art/artists																		
	masterful	domineering, very skillful																		
<b>2. The singular masculine pronouns “He”, “His”, “Him”</b>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <p>When a reporter covers a controversial story, <b>he</b> has a responsibility to present both sides of the issue.</p> <p>Each student should bring <b>his</b> notebook to class everyday.</p> <p><i>Suggested Alternatives:</i></p> <p>When a reported cover controversial stories, they have a responsibility to present both sides of the issue.</p> <p>All students should bring their notebooks to class everyday.</p>																			
<b>3. Terms ending in man refer to functions that may be performed by individuals of either sex</b>	<i>Current Usage</i>	<i>Alternative</i>																		
	anchorman	anchor, anchorperson																		
	chairman	chairperson, chair																		
	spokesman	spokesperson, representative																		
<b>4. Language that trivializes women or diminishes their stature</b>	<p><b>Feminine suffixes such as -ess, -ette, -trix, or -enne, make unnecessary reference to the person’s sex, suggest triviality, unimportance, or inferiority of women occupying such a position.</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>Current Usage</i></th> <th><i>Alternative</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>actress</td> <td>actor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>authoress</td> <td>author</td> </tr> <tr> <td>heroines</td> <td>heroes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>proprietress</td> <td>proprietor</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Use of sex-linked modifiers sounds gratuitous, is patronizing and suggests that the norm for some occupations is for a particular sex</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>Current Usage</i></th> <th><i>Alternative</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>lady doctor, “doctora”</td> <td>doctor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>working mothers</td> <td>wage-earning mothers; mothers working outside the home</td> </tr> <tr> <td>male nurse</td> <td>nurse</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<i>Current Usage</i>	<i>Alternative</i>	actress	actor	authoress	author	heroines	heroes	proprietress	proprietor	<i>Current Usage</i>	<i>Alternative</i>	lady doctor, “doctora”	doctor	working mothers	wage-earning mothers; mothers working outside the home	male nurse	nurse
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<b>5. Language that disparages and marginalizes women (or persons of another gender)</b>	<i>Current Usage</i>	<i>Alternative</i>																		
	girl	adult female																		
	ladies	women																		
	better half	wife, husband																		
	bachelor girl, spinster,	unmarried woman																		

	old maid	
	minority women	ethnic women
	house husbands, house wives	homemakers
	servants, maids	domestic helpers, household service workers
<b>6. Language that fosters unequal gender relations (lack of parallelism)</b>	<i>Current Usage</i>	<i>Alternative</i>
	man and wife	husband and wife
	men and girls	men and women boys and girls
<b>7. The use of terms that call attention to a person's sex in designating occupations, positions, roles, etc.</b>	<i>Current Usage</i>	<i>Alternative</i>
	motherhood, fatherhood	parenthood
	stewardess, steward	flight/cabin attendant
	domestic, maids, servants	household workers, household help
	mailman, postman	mail carrier, letter carrier
<b>8. Gender polarization of meanings in the use of adjectives</b>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <p>Forceful men are perceived as <i>charismatic</i> while forceful women are labelled <i>domineering</i>.</p> <p>Light-hearted men are seen as <i>easygoing</i>, while women of the same nature are <i>frivolous</i>.</p> <p>Men who are interested in everything are called <i>curious</i> people, while women with similar tendency are termed <i>nosy</i>.</p> <p>When men talk together, it is called a <i>convention</i>. But when women talk together, it is called <i>gossip</i>.</p>	

### AVOIDING SEX-ROLE STEROTYPING<sup>3</sup>

**Problem.** Our language often has unconscious sexist assumptions, e.g. that surgeons are always men or nurses are always women or that women are weak and passive while men are aggressive and strong. These perpetuate stereotypes.

#### Alternatives:

1. Identify both men and women in the same way when it comes to profession or employment.  
Example: use "doctor" instead of "doctors"
2. Do not represent women or men as occupying only certain jobs or roles.
3. Treat men and women in a parallel manner.  
Example: use "husband and wife" instead of "man and wife"
4. Avoid language that trivializes women and reinforces stereotyped images.

<sup>3</sup> Gender-Fair Language: A Primer, 18-19.

Example: use “the president’s assistant” instead of “the president’s girl Friday”

5. Avoid languages that calls attention to the sex or sex role of the referent, e.g. “working mothers” or “working wives”.

#### **SEXIST LANGUAGE IN QUOTED MATERIAL<sup>4</sup>**

**Problem.** What do you do when your secondary sources use sexist language?

**Alternatives:**

1. Paraphrase the quote, using non-sexist language, and give the original author credit for the idea.
2. Quote directly and add *sic* after the sexist part.
3. Partially quote the material, rephrase the sexist part and name the source.

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<sup>4</sup> Gender-Fair Language: A Primer, 20.