# Using Inclusive Language

Inclusive language is a key component of both academic and business communication. As opposed to biased language, which assumes a subject's gender, race, or sexual orientation, inclusive language allows the writer to structure sentences more generally.

**Titles/Professions:**
Use gender-neutral language when referring to a profession or title that is not gender specific.

| Biased | Inclusive |
|---|---|
| Fireman | Firefighter |
| Stewardess | Flight attendant |
| Chairman | Chair/Chairperson |

**Avoid assumptions:**
Assumptions are often made accidentally, so avoiding them involves conscious effort. Pay attention to the assumptions you make about subjects' gender, age, sexual orientation, race, and background, as those assumptions impact your ability to communicate effectively.

| Biased | Inclusive |
|---|---|
| Before you go to the doctor, call his office to make an appointment. | Before you go to the doctor, call the office to make an appointment. |
| Studies show that all women are attracted to men with deep voices. | Studies show that heterosexual women are attracted to men with deep voices. |

The first example assumes all doctors are male; the second example assumes all women are heterosexual.

**Use Neutral Language:**
Using some terms and phrases in your writing can reveal bias. Watch for terms that are used to advance a particular political opinion or phrasing that can be seen as offensive.

| Biased | Inclusive |
|---|---|
| Illegal aliens are not eligible for welfare or other entitlement programs. | Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for government assistance programs. |
| Millennials are lazier than previous generations | Millennials have a different idea of the value of work than other generations. |

The first example shows bias because illegal aliens and entitlement programs are politically charged terms that may alienate your audience; the second example shows bias by insulting an entire demographic rather than seeking to understand that demographic.

Biased language might alienate readers or listeners. In business, it can also create a negative association with your products/services *or* decrease productivity in those who feel targeted by that bias.