Gender Neutral Language (presented by Catherine DeJager)

Revise the following sentences to use gender neutral language (some may have multiple correct answers).

Mr. Smith, Mrs. Roe, and Alex worked together on the project. [Alex Jones is nonbinary]

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Professor Schmidt and Karen teach English at Calvin.

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Mr. Baker, Mr. Harrison, and their wives all went to the meeting.

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The lady doctor and male nurse attended to the patient.

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A wife and mother of three, she’s kind, nurturing, hardworking, and a strong candidate for the position.

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We need someone to man the checkout line.

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Man adapts to his environment. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

That waitress gets a lot of tips.

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A student should proofread his paper before he turns it in.

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If a student doesn’t understand the assignment, he should talk to the professor.

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A student at Calvin gets a better education than he would at Hope. (multiple answers)

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Movements/topics in gender neutral language

* Avoiding generic masculine nouns
* Avoiding gratuitous modifiers
* Parallel treatment of women and men
* Alternative pronouns for generic “he” (e.g., “he/she”, “they”, new pronouns)
* Removing feminine noun endings
* Using appropriate tiles of address
* Avoiding masculine terms when referring to God

Guidelines for gender neutral language (from UN)

1. Use non-discriminatory language
   1. Forms of address (“Ms” instead of “Mrs” or “Miss”, consider using “Mx”, address people of equal status the same way)
   2. Avoid expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes
2. Make gender visible when it is relevant for communication\*
   1. Using feminine and masculine pronouns (“he or she”)
   2. Using two different words (“men and women”)
3. Do not make gender visible when it is not relevant for communication
   1. Use gender-neutral words (“humankind”, “person”)
   2. Using plural pronouns/adjectives
   3. Use the pronoun one
   4. Use the relative pronoun who
   5. Use a plural antecedent
   6. Omit the gendered word
   7. Use the passive voice

How to access this presentation

* See the google slides at <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/12HUolKf7I1U1xPCfjHHyac-U3CZj27Z1jpvuXQKMouQ/edit?usp=sharing> for slides, including sources
* This document: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XE957UdY4LJp55w60eL4bGo67qWsZ2QTzHFoPVCeZO0/edit?usp=sharing>