



Republic of the Philippines
Professional Regulation Commission
Manila



MEMORANDUM ORDER NO. 38
SERIES OF 2025

June 03, 2025

TO : ALL OFFICERS AND PERSONNEL
Central and Regional Offices

ALL PROFESSIONAL REGULATORY BOARDS

SUBJECT : GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF GENDER-FAIR LANGUAGE

I. Background and Rationale

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." To attain such equality, Congress enacted Republic Act No. 7192, or "Women in Development and Nation Building Act," requiring all government departments and agencies to review and revise all their regulations, circulars, issuances, and procedures to remove gender bias. Section 13 of Republic Act No. 9710, or "The Magna Carta of Women," likewise mandates the use of gender sensitive language at all times, thus reinforcing the policy of abolishing unequal practices that result in discrimination and inequality in society. Strengthening the mandate of the Magna Carta, the Civil Service Commission issued Memorandum Circular No. 12, series of 2005, encouraging the use of non-sexist language in all official documents, communications, and issuances.

Using gender-fair or gender-inclusive language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender, or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes. Given the key role of language in shaping cultural and social attitudes, using gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias.¹

To comply with the earlier-mentioned laws and regulations, the Gender and Development Focal Point System (GFPS) of the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC/Commission) deemed it imperative to enable mechanisms that will promote the use of gender-fair and gender-inclusive language in all PRC activities, processes, and documents. This advocacy will further strengthen the PRC's gender mainstreaming programs and, at the same time, address the issue of the existence of sexist and non-inclusive language within the Commission by encouraging the personnel to make a conscious effort to avoid implicit and explicit discriminatory language against women or men.

Accordingly, through the GFPS Technical Working Group (TWG), the Commission hereby promulgates the gender-fair language guidelines.

II. Objective

The gender-fair language guidelines aim to eliminate gender discriminating tenor or sexist language² in all official documents, correspondences, memoranda, resolutions, orders, decisions, and other administrative issuances, including social media and website postings, information materials, reports, and in any communications – oral or written, formal or informal, or addressed to an internal or external audience.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/>

² Sexist language has been defined as "the use of language which devalues members of one sex, almost invariably women, and thus fosters gender inequality such that it discriminates against women by rendering them invisible or trivializing them at the same time that it perpetuates notions of so-called male supremacy". (Thelma B. Kintana, editor, "Gender-Fair Language: A Primer" 2014

III. Practical Guide to Gender-Fair Language³

- A. Eliminate language, written and spoken, that excludes or renders invisible persons of another gender and/or people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.
1. Do not use the generic pronouns “he,” “his,” or “him” unless you are certain that you are referring exclusively to a male person or persons.

ILLUSTRATION 1

Example 1: A teacher will always be a part of *his* student’s life.

- **Use plural nouns.**
“Teachers will always be a part of their students’ lives.”
- **Delete “he,” “his,” and “him” altogether.**
“A Teacher will always be a part of a student’s life.”
- **Substitute articles (“the,” “a,” “an”) for “his”; and “who” for “he.”**
“A Teacher will always be a part of the students’ lives.”
- **Substitute “one,” “we,” or “you.”**
“As a teacher, you will always be a part of your student’s life.”

Example 2: Each of the employees finished *his* work on time.

- **Use passive voice.**
“The work was finished on time.”
- **Substitute nouns for pronouns.**
“The employees’ work was finished on time.”

ILLUSTRATION 2

- **Use plural nouns.**

TRADITIONAL:	The lawyer uses <u>his</u> brief to guide him.
SUGGESTION:	The lawyers use <u>their</u> briefs to guide them
- **Delete “he,” “his,” and “him” altogether.**

TRADITIONAL:	The architect uses his blueprint to guide him.
SUGGESTION:	The architect uses a blueprint as a guide.
- **Substitute articles (“the,” “a,” “an”) for “his”, using “who” instead of “he”**

TRADITIONAL:	The writer should know <u>his</u> readers well.
SUGGESTION:	The writer should know <u>the</u> readers well.
TRADITIONAL:	Within 15 days from receipt of the appellant’s memorandum, the appellee may file <u>his</u> memorandum.
SUGGESTION:	Within 15 days from receipt of the appellant’s memorandum, the appellee may file <u>a</u> memorandum.

³ Some contents and examples were adopted from the 2017 Gender-Fair Media Guidebook (Revised Edition), and OCA Circular No. 55-2022, Supreme Court (March 2022)

➤ **Substitute “one,” “we,” or “you.”**

TRADITIONAL: As one grows older, he becomes more reflective.
SUGGESTION: As one grows older, one becomes more reflective.

➤ **Using passive voice**

TRADITIONAL: The director must submit his proposal today.
SUGGESTION: The proposal must be submitted by the director today.

2. Do not use the generic “man” and its derivatives

- Use gender-neutral mass nouns and include women in a general statement about the human condition.
- For “**man**,” substitute “person” or “people,” “individual(s),” “human(s),” “human being(s).”
- For “**mankind**,” substitute “humankind,” “humanity” or “the human race.”
- For “**manhood**,” substitute “adulthood” or “maturity.”

Delete unnecessary references to generic “man.”

ILLUSTRATION 3

TRADITIONAL: Negligence is the omission to do something which a reasonable man would do.

SUGGESTION: Negligence is the omission to do something which a reasonable person would do.

TRADITIONAL: Man is naturally endowed with the faculties of understanding and free will.

SUGGESTION: Men and women are naturally endowed with the faculties of understanding and free will.

3. Use gender-neutral alternatives for words ending in “man” but which refer to functions performed by either sex.

- Use “**chairperson**” or “chair” for “chairman.”
- Use “**representative**,” “**members of Congress**,” or “**legislator**” for “Congressman.”
- Use “**manager**,” “**business executive**,” “**business owner**,” “**entrepreneur**” for “**businessman/businesswoman**.”
- For “**layman**,” substitute “layperson.”

B. Eliminate language that trivializes women or diminishes their stature

1. Avoid using diminutive feminine suffixes (e.g., “-ess,” “-ette,” “-ix,” “-enne”) that make unnecessary reference to the person’s sex. These suffixes suggest that the person referred to is a diminutive or lesser version of the male counterpart.
 - Use terms such as “**actor**,” “**comedian**,” “**hero**,” and “**usher**” to refer to both men and women. After all, a person’s sex is irrelevant to the functions attached to these positions.

ILLUSTRATION 4

TRADITIONAL: There, they saw Julia Barreto, a popular movie starlet.
SUGGESTION: There, they saw Julia Barreto, a popular movie actor.

TRADITIONAL: The Chairperson saw Maria wearing a smart usherette uniform.
SUGGESTION: The Chairperson saw Maria wearing a smart usher's uniform.

2. Avoid using sex-linked modifiers. Inserting a sex-linked modifier before a generic noun is unnecessary and patronizing, and suggests that the position is typically for males. If the sex of the person is relevant to the usage, use the modifiers "female" or "woman" instead of "lady" or "girl." "Girl" suggests immaturity while "lady" is associated with stereotypical feminine attributes.

- Use the generic "**doctor**" or "**physician**," instead of "lady doctor" or "doctora."
- Use the generic "**lawyer**," "**secretary**," and "**nurse**" even when referring to a female lawyer, a male secretary, or a male nurse, respectively.
- Simply say "**hero**" for both males and females instead of making the distinction with "heroic women."

ILLUSTRATION 5

TRADITIONAL: The complainant pleaded with the lady doctor to save the child.
SUGGESTION: The complainant pleaded with the physician to save the child.

TRADITIONAL: The lady lawyer files a notice of appeal.
SUGGESTION: The lawyer files a notice of appeal.

3. Use gender-neutral terms that the law employs.

ILLUSTRATION 6

TRADITIONAL: Complainant assumed office as Barangay Chairman in hold-over capacity by operation of law.
SUGGESTION: Complainant assumed office as Punong Barangay in hold-over capacity by operation of law.

TRADITIONAL: Juana was only fourteen-years old and a newly employed housemaid.
SUGGESTION: Juana was only fourteen-years old and a newly employed kasambahay.

C. Eliminate language that disparages or marginalizes women.

1. Avoid using words with negative connotations that tend to belittle or subject a person or class to ridicule. Use neutral words instead.
- Use "**salespersons**" instead of "salesgirls" or "salesman" since they are almost invariably adults."
 - Use "**unmarried woman**" instead of "bachelor girl," "spinster" or "old maid."
 - Use "**ethnic women**" instead of "minority women." The latter marginalizes them twice over.

- Use **wage-earning mothers** instead of working mothers
- Instead of “house husbands” or “housewives,” use **homemakers**.”
- Use the gender-neutral alternative **“administrative assistant”** in place of “girl Friday.”

D. Eliminate language that perpetuates unequal gender relations.

1. Cite names (proper and generic) in parallelism.
 - Use **“husband and wife”** instead of “man and wife.” “Man” is a gender-neutral term while “husband” and “wife” are terms that automatically associate the subject with a partner, and all that the relationship entails.
2. Cite the names and titles of male and female subjects similarly.
 - For example, say “Secretary Laguesma and Secretary Pangandaman” instead of “Secretary Laguesma and Madam Pangandaman. Also, say “James and Nadine” or “Reid and Lustre” instead of “Nadine and Reid.”
3. Address people formally in a gender-neutral manner.
 - Use **“Ms.”** Instead of “Miss” or “Mrs...,” even when a woman’s marital status is known.
 - Use a married woman's first name instead of her husband’s (e.g., “Ms. Annabelle Lee”, not “Mrs. Herman Lee”).
 - Use the corresponding title for females (“Ms.,” “Dr.,” “Prof.”) whenever a title is appropriate for males.

E. Eliminate sexism in symbolic representation of gender in words, sentences, and texts by:

1. Taking the context of the word, analyzing its meaning, and eliminating sexism in the concept

TRADITIONAL:	feelings of brotherhood, feelings of fraternity
SUGGESTION:	feelings of kinship, solidarity
TRADITIONAL:	the founding fathers
SUGGESTION:	the founders, the founding leaders

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

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

F. Use “Dear Colleague” or “Editor” or “Professor,” etc. in letters to unknown persons (instead of Dear Sir,” “Gentlemen”).

IV. List of Gender-Fair Terms⁴

⁴ Adopted from the Gender-Fair Language: A Primer, Thelma B. Kintanar (1998)

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Gender-fair/Gender-neutral</i>
man	human being, human, person
mankind, men	human beings, humans, humankind, humanity, people, human race, human species, society, men and women
working men, workmen	worker, wage earners
forefather	ancestor
layman	layperson, nonspecialist, non-professional
manhood	adulthood, maturity
manning	staffing, working, running
one man show	one person show, solo exhibition
founding fathers	founders
manpower	human resources, staff, personnel, labor force, workforce, personnel complement, employees
statemanship	diplomacy
man-made	manufactures, synthetic, artificial, machine-made
anchorman	anchor, anchorperson
businessman	business executive, manager, business owner, retailer
cameraman	Camera operators, cinematographers, photographers
chairman	chairperson, chair
congressman	representative, member of congress, congress member, legislator
firemen	firefighters
foremen	supervisors
policeman	police officer, law enforcement officer
salesman, saleslady	salesperson, sales representative
spokesman	spokesperson, representative
sportsmen	sport enthusiasts
watchmen	guards
repairmen	repairers
wives	Spouses, partners
actress	actor
stateman	diplomats, political leaders
hostess	host
maid	household helper, <i>kasambahay</i>
chambermaids	hotel staff
fatherhood, motherhood	parenthood
cowboy, cowgirl	ranch hand
bellman	bellboy
clergyman	member of the clergy, minister, rabbi, priest, pastor, etc.
fathers (religious)	priests
cleaning lady	cleaner
stewardess, steward	flight attendant, cabin attendant
waiter, waitress	waitstaff
brotherhood	solidarity, human fellowship, human kinship
gentleman's agreement	honorable agreement, unwritten agreement
landlord, landlady	owner, proprietor, lessor
manholes	utility holes, sewer holes
man-made disaster	human-induced disaster
man-made climate change	anthropogenic climate crisis
mother nature, mother earth	nature, earth
mother tongue	native language
mothering	parenting, child-rearing, childcare
noblemen	nobility, aristocrats
no-man's land	uninhabited land, neutral zone, terra nullius
caveman	cave dweller
prehistoric man	prehistoric human being
workmen's compensation	worker's compensation
yes-man	supporter, avid follower

young man, young woman	youth, adolescent teenager
ladies and gentlemen	everyone, folks
committee of wise men	advisory panel
Craftsman	Artisan, craftsperson
Craftsmanship	Craft, craft skills
Draughtsman	designer

V. Gender-Fair Hearing Room Etiquette⁵ For Hearing Officers and Professional Regulatory Board (PRB) Chairpersons and Members⁶

1. Address all lawyers neutrally as “counsel” or “attorney.”
 - Refrain from referring to female lawyers as “lady” or “female” counsel or male lawyers as “gentleman” or “male” counsel. Instead use their surnames after the word “Atty.” (e.g., Atty. Miranda) or just use “Counsel.”
 - In making inquiries, use a question that applies to everyone, such as, “Will all counsel please identify themselves to the body?”
2. Address all non-lawyer parties as “Mister,” “Mrs.,” or “Miss,” “Sir” or “Ma’am” as appropriate.
 - Refrain from referring to litigants as “Madam Plaintiff” or “Mister Plaintiff,” but just “Plaintiff” or just refer to them by name (e.g., Mr. Ramos, Miss Estrada).
 - Refrain from referring to witnesses as “Mister Witness” or “Madam Witness.” Instead, use their name (e.g., Mr. Cruz, Mrs. Reyes).
3. When addressing minors, refrain from using words like “little boy,” “little girl,” “*hijo/iho*,” “*hija/iha*.” Instead, use their first names or nicknames, if known, to put them at ease and to avoid the diminutive references.
4. Refrain from any act or proceeding that will demean, embarrass, humiliate, or degrade any party because of gender.
5. Refrain from perpetuating gender stereotypes.

VI. Responsibilities

All concerned PRBs, officers, and personnel are enjoined to observe and apply the practical guides in their written outputs, meetings, and official activities, whenever applicable.

The **GFPS-TWG** shall include a session on evaluating select documents to ensure compliance with the guidelines.

VII. Effectivity

This Order shall take effect immediately and shall remain in force, unless otherwise revoked or amended accordingly.

For compliance.



CHARITO A. ZAMORA
 Chairperson

⁵ Adopted from the OCA Circular No. 55-2022, Supreme Court (March 2022), Gender-Fair Courtroom Etiquette
⁶ During mediation or clarificatory hearings

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