

Gender-neutral language

Do we need this?



Today, our world is not longer shaped by men only, as it was 100 years ago. Women and those, who identify themselves neither as man or woman, have the same right to shape this world – in other words: the claim for equal rights, opportunities and status.

As much as most people surely agree with this, so much their gazes often darken when we get onto the subject of language. Gender-neutral language is unnecessary, inconvenient and disturbs the flow of reading? The generic masculine includes everyone else, anyway? Well, let's do a little experiment; answer completely spontaneously:

Two waiters are serving the meals. - What are their names?

If your answer is „Nico and Paul“, not „Nico and Maria“ or „Hannah and Maria“, then it is quite similar to most other people's reply.^[1] And this is exactly why gender-neutral language is important!

For language does not only describe our contemporary world, but language also shapes it. When people of all gender are not only meant, but actually included, the visibility of the whole human diversity in our minds is increased. This helps to overcome stereotypes and supports respectful interaction with each other.

But still gender-neutral language appears bumpy and difficult to read? Well, new things (not only in language) often seem inconvenient, at first. However, they can become a habit very quickly – as the generic masculine is now.

As chemistry has traditionally been a male-dominated discipline, it is particularly important for GDCh and JCF to involve everyone and to exclude nobody. Gender-neutral language is a start and actually really easy!

In this guideline, we would like to show you some options of gender-neutral language in English as well as highlighting the additional complexity in German. We believe that this will facilitate inclusive environments in your local JCF.

[1] Lisa Irmen, Ute Linner, Zeitschrift für Psychologie / Journal of Psychology (2005), 213, pp. 167-175.

It is as simple as this!

There are many ways to reach the goal – in chemistry and in language!

Gender-neutral terms

- *server and chairperson* instead of *waiter and chairman*
- pronouns such as *one, who, they* instead of *he, she*.
- **And in German?**
 - There are many gender-neutral terms!
Person, Mitglied, Lehrkraft or *Leitung*
 - Name the institution instead of the person.
Professur instead of *Professor*
 - Describe people by their actions.
Studierende und Promovierende instead of *Studenten und Doktoranden*

Rearrangement of a sentence

- Passive sentence
'Dinner is served' instead of *'The waiter serves dinner'*
- **And in German?**
 - Passive sentences are even more common.
„Es werden Getränke serviert“ instead of *„Die Studenten servieren Getränke“*
 - Nominalisation
„Für die Teilnahme gibt es ein Zertifikat“ instead of *„Teilnehmer bekommen ein Zertifikat“*
 - Use adjectives and verbs.
„Barrierefreier Zugang“ instead of *„Zugang für Rollstuhlfahrer“*, *„Vorgestellt von“* instead of *„Redner“*

Gender gap and gender star

- Symbolically, the whole gender diversity is included in the gap or the star.
*s_he, s*he*
- **And in German?**
 - The same applies to terms describing people.
*Jungchemiker_innen, Jungchemiker*innen*

Using female and male form

- Waitress and waiter; Jungchemikerinnen und Jungchemiker*
- x Involves the problem that only men and women are addressed, but the whole diversity of gender identities is withheld. The previous options are more inclusive.

Why not discuss this topic at your next JCF meeting? Find your favourite option!