

II. THE POCKET GUIDE TO GENDER-DIVERSE LEGAL WRITING

Writing about Specific Persons

Honorifics, Titles, Greetings

Use and respect where titles are known
Common: Mr/Ms/Mrs/Mx (Gender-neutral
Mx pron. "mix")

When you don't know a person's title	Ask and respect
	Use role descriptor (e.g., Counsel) or academic title (e.g., Professor)
	Use full name (repeat if necessary)
	Use name or role as a defined term (e.g., Ginny Lau, the "Owner")
	Use gender inclusive language and gender-neutral techniques

How to greet people when titles unknown	Use gender-inclusive greetings (e.g., To Whom It May Concern; Dear Counsel)
	Use greetings reflecting common role (e.g., Dear Members of the Jury)

Pronouns

Ask and respect
Common: He/she/they (singular)
Less common: constructed gender-neutral pronouns

When using they/them (singular), use plural conjugation ("they are" not "they is")

When using constructed gender-neutral pronouns, consider if explanation is required in footnote or parentheses.

Examples:
My junior on this file is An Turcotte (pronouns are ey/em/eir/eirself).

The custodian knew that Dale belongs to the club and assumed it must be hir¹ membership on the table. Ze must have forgotten it.

¹Ze/hir/hirs/hirself are gender-neutral pronouns used in the same way as they/them/their/themselves, he/him/his/himself or she/her/hers/herself.

Writing about People Generally

Avoiding Exclusionary Language

Avoid using male or binary defaults to refer to everyone

Avoid masculinized or feminized nouns (person hours not man hours; server not waitress)

Avoid irrelevant and unnecessary gendering

Using Gender Inclusive Language

Neutral words or phrases	Use role descriptive terms instead of man or woman (e.g., shopper, driver)
	Use gender-neutral family terms (e.g., parent, spouse, sibling)
	Use anyone, anybody, everyone, somebody, one, person, public, etc.

Use they/them as a neutral singular pronoun

Use gender-diverse examples (men, women, and non-binary people, not just men and women)

Use plural forms to avoid individual pronouns (e.g., "applicants must submit their papers" instead of "the applicant must submit his papers")

Using Gender-Neutral Techniques

Eliminate the pronoun	Simple removal if implied (e.g., "at home" instead of "at her home")
	Restructure sentence to remove
	Remove possessives (e.g., "when parking" not "when parking her car")
Replace the pronoun	Use "the," "a" or "an"
	Repeat the noun
	Use "who/whose" as relative pronouns
	Use "personally"

Changing Point of View or Voice

Write in 1st or 2nd person (I/we/you instead of he/she)

Use passive voice (sparingly!) to remove pronouns



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