

Writing Gender Fair Job Advertisements



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Attracting more women into placements in traditionally male dominated sectors is a challenge many placement practitioners and employers seeking to diversify their workforce continue to grapple with. Under-recruitment results in the continued under-representation of women in a range of fields such as engineering, the natural sciences and business, all of which offer both great placement and graduate career prospects. Despite excellent prospects, with many of the best paid graduate jobs being in engineering, in [2021 women made up just 16.5% of the engineering sector workforce](#) (compared with 47.7% of the workforce overall).

Words matter

Subtle changes in the language used in recruitment materials can put women off a job. Language can unconsciously influence our perceptions and behaviour and a number of studies have shown that the specific wording used in job adverts can decrease the appeal of the position being advertised to female applicants and might help explain the persistent gender gap in traditionally male dominated sectors. These findings are relevant to inclusive placement practice. Writing gender fair placement adverts is a positive action practitioners can take to address gender inequity in recruitment, especially in support of increasing women's access to excellent opportunities in traditionally male dominated fields.

The Research

[Gaucher*](#) reports on five studies that investigated the impact of gendered wording in job adverts. Two studies analysed over four thousand job adverts from a range of male-dominated fields (e.g. engineering, maths) and female-dominated fields (e.g. applied health studies, arts) for their use of masculine wording (words that have been shown to be associated with male stereotypes) and feminine wording (words associated with female stereotypes) e.g. ambitious, assertive vs. committed, supportive. Three studies explored the impact of deliberately gendered job adverts for positions in male- and female-dominated fields on male and female student participants. The job adverts were written using either masculine- or feminine- wording and the student participants were asked if they felt qualified for the position, about their sense of belonging in the job and its appeal to them.

Findings demonstrate that gendered wording in recruitment materials subtly signals who does and does not belong in the position being advertised.

Job adverts for stereotypically male jobs were found to use more masculine wording, which led women who, despite perceiving themselves qualified for the role, to [i] think the working environment or organisation was male dominated, [ii] believe they would not belong in the role being advertised, and [iii] find the job less appealing.

Feminine wording in job adverts had no significant impact on either men's belief in how much they belonged in an advertised role, or its appeal.





In summary

Neutral or feminine worded adverts are the most inclusive as they do not deter men or women. The least inclusive adverts are masculine coded as could they deter women.

Positive action that placement practitioners can take is to write gender-fair adverts

Placement practitioners may wish to use the following gender decoder tools to analyse the text of draft recruitment materials for gendered wording that may deter women from making an application:

- Kat Manfield Gender Decoder [tool](#)
- Total Jobs Gender Bias Decoder [tool](#)

These tools are free and easy to use- you simply cut and paste the required text and then press submit. Both masculine- and feminine- coded words are highlighted alongside an overall assessment of the gender bias within the submitted text.

Gender decoder tool analysis of a placement advert

Mechanical Engineer Summer Internship

XXX is an international defence company operating in our focus countries of the UK, Australasia, Canada, France and South Africa, with exports to additional markets. We provide a range of products and service solutions to enhance our customer' defence capabilities and critical assets. Our business is underpinned by a deep **understanding** of technology integration and engineering, infrastructure management and specialist training. We help our customers around the world to cost effectively improve the capability, reliability and availability of their most critical assets.

Get an incredible summer experience or immerse yourself in our world for a year. It's not just graduates who get to experience the extraordinary things we do at XXX. These 10 to 12-week internships over the summer holiday give you the opportunity to try out a discipline and see if it's something you want to do once you graduate.

What you'll be doing

At our **YY** site, we're specialists in the design and engineering of complex marine platforms, as well as the **lead** contractor for the UK Submarine Dismantling Programme. We are also world **leaders** in the development and supply of Gas Systems. You could be involved in any of these extraordinary engineering projects or you may get involved in something completely new. As long as you are bursting with ideas and enthusiasm, we'll have something for you to

Your results

[How it works](#)

You have a **balance** of **male-coded** and **female-coded** words.



Your text is more biased than most job ads on Totaljobs.com. **0.9%** of all words in your text are male-coded. We suggest replacing them:

courageous **lead** **leaders** **Principles**

**a limitation of the research in this area is that it has not explored non-binary coded words or impacts on non-binary or trans people.*

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