

Gender in English

English does not have any complicated grammatical gender system. People are usually he or she. Things are it.

He is a teacher. (NOT It is a teacher.)

She is a doctor.

It is an apple tree. (NOT She is an apple tree.)

Sometimes he and she are used to refer to animals. This usually happens when they are being thought of as having personality.

I have a rabbit called Joe. He is very cute. (More natural than 'It is very cute')

Some people use she for cars, ships and bikes.

The ship has struck an iceberg. She is sinking. (OR It is sinking.)

Cases where the sex of a person is not known

English has traditionally used he in cases where the sex of a person is not known.

A teacher can't do a good job if he doesn't have patience.

Nowadays this usage is regarded as sexist. Instead, many people use the expression he or she.

A teacher can't do a good job if he or she doesn't have patience.

In an informal style, they is often used instead of he or she.

If anybody hasn't registered yet, he or she should do so at once. (More formal)

If anybody hasn't registered yet, they should do so at once. (Informal)