

Words ending in -man

Some words ending in -man do not have a common feminine equivalent. Examples are: chairman and fireman. But because most women object to being called 'chairman' or 'spokesman', these expressions are now being avoided in general references to people of either sex. In some cases, the word person is now used instead of man. And this can happen even in references to men.

Examples are: chairperson, spokesperson.

Susie has just been elected chairperson of the club. OR Susie has just been elected chair of the club.

A spokesperson for the government said that there was no cause for concern.

Words ending in -woman are also becoming common. Examples are: chairwoman and spokeswoman.

Another tendency is to use words that are not gender-specific. For example, the word fireman is now being replaced by the word firefighter. In the same way, the word foreman has been replaced by the word supervisor which can refer to people of either sex.

Man and mankind

These two words are still used to refer to the whole of the human race.

Man is mortal. (This statement refers to the whole of the human race including women.)

Nuclear weapons are the greatest enemies of the mankind.

However, some people are against this use. They prefer using the expressions people, humanity or human race.