

Recommendations of the TU Dortmund on gender-sensitive language

The TU Dortmund sees itself as a university of lived and valued diversity. Language shapes perception, thinking and behaviour. For this reason, TU Dortmund recommends that its students and employees strive for inclusive and gender-equitable language. Oral and written communication is dependent on the willing cooperation of those involved and only succeeds when the other person feels addressed and - conversely - can express themselves appropriately.

The generic masculine common in German violates the principle of appropriateness by merely 'co-meaning' or even associatively excluding women and non-binary people ("Name three Nobel Prize winners.") With the term "Gendering" refers to the effort to achieve an inclusive, gender-neutral and comprehensible language practice. Gender-equitable language is anchored in the NRW State Equality Act (§4 LGG NRW); its concerns are visibility and participation.

In oral communication, all groups of people can be specifically addressed. Written language is essentially subject to the principle of abbreviation, which has an effect above all in accelerated and networked digital communication. For some time now, creative generic spellings have been developing in German in order to be able to refer directly to women, men and non-binary people in written language as well.

Below are some concrete ways to use gender-appropriate language:

- Preferably use the **gender*star** if you want to make room for all gender identities - for example for "Dortmunder*innen". The TU Dortmund recommends using this form of writing. The so-called truncation from the programming language stands in the machine language context for all other alphanumeric characters; in the human language context, the asterisk symbolically stands for that blank space in which female, male and non-binary people are represented. Spoken, the gender*star is a very short pause between word(stem) and suffix. Although the gender*star is not currently adequately rendered by common read-aloud programs, its implementation in programs is now understandable. If in doubt, check context and technical conditions.
- A possible alternative to the gender*star is the **gender:colon** - for example in the mention of students. Advantages are the minimally invasive character of the punctuation mark and the facilitation of gender-appropriate writing through the good accessibility of the punctuation mark on the keyboard. Please also note here possible difficulties of rendering by reading programs.

- Use **substantive progressive forms** such as "students" or {"participants".
- Actively look for **gender-neutral alternatives**: Instead of the "candidate party", the invitation is extended to the "exam party". "Teachers" become "teaching staff", the "Attendance Fee" to "Attendance Fee", the "Speakers List" to "Speakers List". "Team" is often more appropriate than "crew."
- For German, consult **the DUDEN in all cases of doubt**. The **DUDEN** closely monitors developments in contemporary language and only includes them in the rulebook when language change processes become established in the medium term. Gender-equitable language is a designated topic in the Duden publications.
- In **English**, there are comparable developments of non-binary and inclusive language use. In particular, the gender-neutral use of pronouns "they"/"their" in the singular instead of "he/him/his", she/her/her" has proven itself ("The Professor is teaching their students."). The form of address "Mx." instead of "Mr./Ms." also finds its way into authoritative dictionaries and is common in many companies and institutions. A practical overview of inclusive language practice is provided by the United Nations (<https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>) and the US National Council of Teachers of English (<https://ncte.org/statement/genderfairuseoflang/>).
- Take the time and space to **communicate according to the context and situation**: "Good things take time". If your counterpart feels addressed, the exchange will also be more successful.

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