

To avoid bias in your recommendation letters:

- ✓ Have established criteria for particular types of letters & address only the criteria.
 - In particular, for professional activities, be consistent with attention to scholarship and professional productivity for all individuals for whom you write.
- ✓ Keep things evidence-based and share only direct observations (when possible).
 - Focus on research accomplishments and professional productivity, teaching, service and sympathy with the mission.
- ✓ Identify and evaluate accomplishments over effort (grindstone adjectives).
- ✓ Interpersonal skills are important, but keep them balanced with other characteristics.
- ✓ When describing stereotypically female traits, consider if the characteristics are relevant and if other applicable characteristics/achievements have been overlooked.
- ✓ Use titles and surnames consistently for all candidates/applicants.
- ✓ Avoid invoking a stereotype (“she is not too emotional” or “ his English is very good”). Likewise, avoid referring to age, sex, disability, race, nationality or religion. Each of these, while most likely well-meaning can evoke bias in the reader.
- ✓ Avoid personal information.
- ✓ For a given type of letter, write letters of equal length for each applicant/candidate.
- ✓ Try the **Gender Bias Calculator**: <https://www.tomforth.co.uk/genderbias/>
Paste your letter in the window and it will list words more often associated with women and words more often associated with men.

Several suggestions come from: the University of Arizona’s Commission on the Status of Women:
www.csw.arizona.edu/LORbias

References:

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