



Gender-Inclusive

Language Guidelines

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Gender-Inclusive

Language Guidelines

Language plays a powerful role in shaping how we perceive the world, how we think, and how we interact with one another. The words we choose influence our attitudes, decisions, and behaviors, and can either reinforce existing biases or contribute to a more equal and inclusive environment.

With this in mind, the Gender-Inclusive Language Guide has been developed to support Sanovel employees in adopting language that promotes gender equality, respect, awareness, and inclusion in everyday communication.

The guide provides practical guidance on using gender-inclusive and sensitive language across internal and external communications, written correspondence, and corporate documents. By encouraging thoughtful and conscious language choices, we aim to foster a more equitable communication culture and contribute to an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and included.

We hope this guide serves as a practical and valuable resource for all Sanovel employees and stakeholders, supporting a more conscious, respectful, and inclusive approach to communication.



Understanding

Gender Equality

Gender refers to the gender identity individuals develop in accordance with social and cultural norms, expectations, and roles. Beyond biological sex, the concept encompasses an identity and form of expression shaped by social structures and continuously reproduced over time.

Judith Butler, whose work has made significant contributions to the study of gender, emphasizes the following perspective: **Gender is not a biological necessity**, but an ongoing performance. Gender identities are constituted through a series of repeated acts shaped and reinforced by social structures.

Gender refers to the roles and expectations attributed to individuals based on their biological characteristics and the culture in which they are born and raised. Preparations made for a newborn baby girl, such as choosing the color pink, or referring to a baby boy with expressions such as “lion” or “ram,” as well as expectations that women should take care of household chores and children while men should be responsible for financially supporting the family, are examples of how gender roles are shaped.

All these behaviors, stereotypes, and assumptions can contribute to discrimination and inequality among individuals in society.



Understanding

Gender Equality

Sex refers to the biological differences between female and male bodies. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the socially constructed and culturally rooted differences between women and men. An individual's gender is not determined solely by nature or biology; rather, it is shaped by roles and characteristics imposed through social norms and stereotypes. The roles, behaviors, actions, and attributes socially constructed for women and men are encompassed by the concept of gender.¹ Gender is a dynamic construct that varies across time and cultures.

Gender equality means ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their sex or gender, have equal opportunities and rights in all areas of life, receive equal treatment, are able to develop their knowledge and skills, and make their own choices in any field they wish. Gender equality and women's empowerment are recognized as fundamental requirements for sustainable development in all its dimensions.

Since 1990, the United Nations has embraced a human development approach that seeks to ensure all development efforts contribute to the well-being of society and provide people with equal and fair access to the resources and opportunities they need to fully realize their potential. This approach is founded on the principle that no individual should face discrimination on the basis of race, language, religion, social class, age, physical ability, income level, gender identity, or gender.

Gender equality does not mean making women and men the same. Rather, it means ensuring that every individual has equal rights, opportunities, and the freedom to develop their abilities and make their own choices, regardless of gender.

¹ UNDP Gender-Responsive Communication Guide



Sanovel

Gender Equality Manifest

At Sanovel, we believe that what makes each individual unique and valuable is their perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and differences. A balanced, equitable, and fair approach is adopted across all human resources processes, without discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, language, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, or cultural differences. With this perspective, one of Sanovel's most important goals is to lead and set an example for the industry.

The “**Sanovel Behavioral Model**” has been developed around these principles and objectives. At the heart of leadership behaviors within the Sanovel Behavioral Model lies the ability to demonstrate empathy. Sanovel leaders are expected to demonstrate the ability to consider different perspectives and experiences, respect differences, and foster an inclusive environment when making decisions.

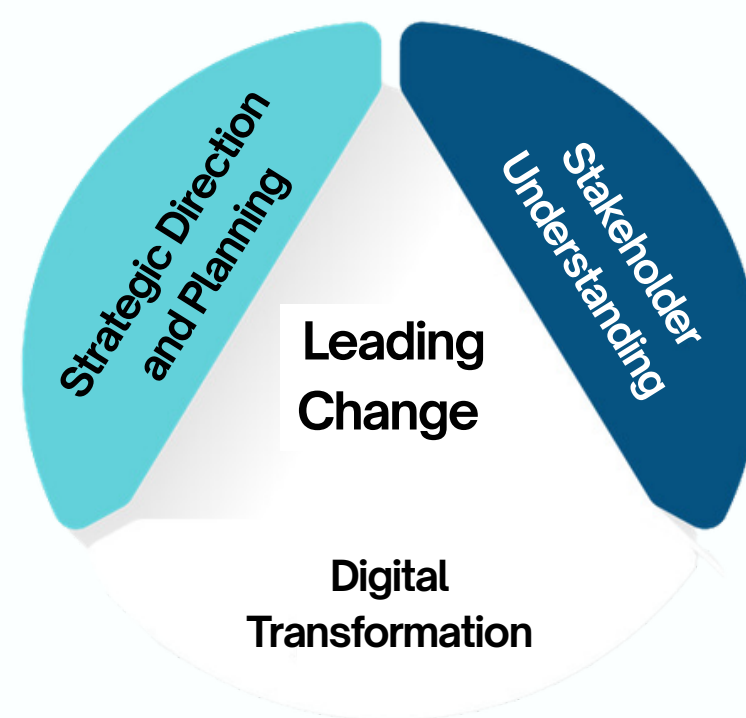
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Behavioral Model

Core Competencies



Leadership Competencies



Common Strategic Competencies



Gender-Responsive Language

in Communication

The words and visuals used in communication convey meaning through the perspectives of those who interpret them. Visual, verbal, and written language shapes the boundaries of our thoughts and behaviors.

Achieving equality in communication requires approaching content from a **gender equality perspective**, using language consciously, and thereby contributing to positive changes in thoughts and behaviors. Language has the power not only to reinforce gender inequality but also to transform inequality into equality. Therefore, every word used in spoken, visual, and written communication should be carefully chosen with **an equitable and gender-sensitive approach**.

Equality in communication is achieved through an environment where women and men are equally represented in society, share roles and responsibilities equally, have equal access to resources and opportunities, and where balance is maintained in decision-making, leadership, and participation processes in both social and professional life. It also requires questioning stereotypes and prejudices, respecting diversity and inclusion, and using visual and written language that reflects and reinforces these principles.

Stereotypes in Communication

Occupation

One of the most prominent examples of gender-based discrimination in the workplace is the classification of jobs as “women’s work” and “men’s work.” Occupations should not be classified based on biological sex. In professions traditionally perceived as being associated with men, the word “woman” should not be added before the job title, and indirect expressions that exclude women should be avoided.

Sexist Language

Female Engineer

Female Soldier

Male Fashion Designer

Female Carpenter

A female pilot was involved in a plane crash.

A female worker in Türkiye achieved remarkable success with an extraordinary project.

Equitable Use of Language

Engineer

Asker

Fashion Designer

Carpenter

A pilot was involved in a plane crash.

A worker in Türkiye achieved remarkable success with an extraordinary project.

Stereotypes in Communication

Age



In a team made up of people from different age groups, emphasizing younger employees' age or lack of experience may negatively affect their motivation. Likewise, it is important for younger employees to set aside any biases they may hold toward their older colleagues.

"I'll give you a pass because you're young."

Just a kid

"At that age..."

Old-timer, seasoned professional

"You don't know what it was like back then."

Dinosaur

"Don't act childish."

Newcomer, inexperienced

Stereotypes in Communication

Physical Attributes & Appearance



Choices related to clothing style and physical appearance are matters of personal preference. As long as they comply with the organization's dress code, choices regarding clothing, makeup, footwear, and accessories reflect individuals' personal tastes and preferences. People should not be criticized or judged based on these choices.

A person's body belongs solely to them, and no one else has the right to make comments about or exercise control over another person's body without their consent. Discriminatory or inequitable language should not be used based on a person's physical characteristics, body type, or disability.

Dwarf / Beanpole / Stumpy

Fat / Fatty / Delicate

Have you gained weight?

Fussy

Disabled / Handicapped

Do you really need to wear that much makeup?

Scruff

Bald / Baldy / Big-headed

Does that outfit really suit you?

Examples of Gendered Language

The words, expressions, and communication styles we use in our daily lives can either support gender equality or reinforce inequality. Effective communication requires us to listen to others, pay attention to what they say, and value their thoughts and perspectives. Healthy communication is built on mutual respect, honesty, and consideration for everyone's rights. **Prejudiced expressions are not funny, even when they are presented as humor.**



Expressions presented as humor are not funny.

“This much courage at your age! Unbelievable.”

“This is a man’s job.”

“You became a manager before turning 40, and you’re a woman manager, too?”

“There’s no room for women’s emotions in this job.”

“You should dress like a man/woman.”

Examples of Gendered Language

Idioms & Proverbs

Some languages around the world distinguish between masculine and feminine forms of words. In Turkish, however, words are not grammatically gendered. Nevertheless, some commonly used sayings in Turkish reflect or reinforce such distinctions. Expressions and proverbs that contain social and cultural biases are frequently used in everyday language, often reflecting traditional gender roles and stereotypes.



Some cultural expressions and sayings contain underlying gender stereotypes.

“If you don’t discipline your daughter, you’ll regret it later.”

“A real man can handle anything.”

“A boy grows up to be a strong man, while a girl grows up to be nothing.”

“Does that really suit a nice young lady like you?”

“Don’t meddle in men’s business.”

“A woman can make or break a man.”

Examples of Gendered Language

Women / Girls / “Ladies” Terminology

In everyday language, the word “girl” is sometimes used to imply innocence or inexperience. The word “woman,” on the other hand, is sometimes perceived as inappropriate or impolite, leading people to use “lady” instead. However, just as referring to someone as a “man” is not inappropriate, neither is referring to someone as a “woman.” In fact, “woman” is the appropriate term.

The terms “lady,” “miss,” or “girl” should not be used as substitutes for “woman” when referring to adult women. Care should be taken to avoid gendered and discriminatory expressions in everyday language.

Sexist Language

Maiden Name

My sister, My Sibling

Master, Boss, Big Brother

Ladies’ Restroom

Equitable Use of Language

Birth Surname /
Previous Surname

Dear Ayşe / My Colleague

My Colleague /
My Team Member

Women’s Restroom

Examples of Gendered Language

The Use of the Term “Man”

Although the word “man” was historically used in a general sense to mean “human being” or “person,” linguistic and cultural changes over time have led it to acquire a gendered connotation and increasingly evoke the image of a male individual. Research has shown that when the word “man” is included in an expression, many people tend to visualize a male figure. Therefore, considering established language conventions and the evolution of language, care should be taken to avoid making women invisible through the use of “man” in language.

Sexist Language

Be a man

Man of science /
Businessman

A man of his word

Man-day / Man-hour

Equitable Use of Language

Be a good person

Scientist / Businessperson

A person of their word

Person-day / Person-hour

At Sanovel, We Work Towards a Balanced and Meaningful Life.

Sanovel employees, we know that what truly makes each of us unique and valuable is our diverse perspectives, lives, backgrounds, and differences.

By embracing an empathetic approach in our work processes and in both our professional and social lives, we advocate for equality and take action against gender-based stereotypes—starting with the language we use.

Together, as women and men, we will continue working toward a balanced and meaningful life for all.

Thank you for taking the time to explore our Language Guide.

