



Masculine and Feminine Nouns

One way in which nouns may be classified is by their gender. We call this system of organization “grammatical gender.”

In English, there are both 1) common gender nouns and 2) those that are considered “male” and “female” because they distinguish between feminine or masculine categories.

Common Gender Nouns:

They are used regardless of gender, that is, they are used for both males and females and do not signal or distinguish gender in any way.

Some examples of common gender nouns (which are used for any gender) in the English language are:

- artist
- baby
- child
- friend
- guest
- owner
- painter
- parent
- sibling
- singer
- student
- teacher

Masculine and Feminine Nouns:

On the other hand, some nouns distinguish between gender, with masculine terms referring to men, boys, and male animals, while feminine terms are used for women, girls, and female animals. Here are some examples of masculine and feminine nouns in the English language:

Masculine	Feminine
actor	actress
boy	girl
brother	sister
father	mother
god	goddess
groom	bride
grandfather	grandmother
heir	heiress
host	hostess
husband	wife
king	queen
man	woman
master	mistress
nephew	niece
prince	princess
sir	madam
son	daughter
uncle	aunt

Gender Neutral Titles in Professional Life:

A note about gender preference and moves toward gender neutrality is necessary at this point. Notably, the common noun for many of the ones listed above is the masculine one, for example, privileging the male terms “actor,” “heir,” or “host” as the default for either men or women.

However, to avoid gender distinctions, many professions have moved to more gender-neutral terms over the past decades. For example, rather than using “waiter” for a male and “waitress” for a female, it is common to refer to both as a “server.” Similarly, on an airline, rather than using “steward” for a male and “stewardess” for a female, it is common to refer to both as a “flight attendant.” You can see some additional examples below.

- waiter/waitress → server
- steward/stewardess → flight attendant
- fireman/firewoman → firefighter
- policeman/policewoman → police officer
- salesman/saleswoman → salesperson
- chairman/chairwoman → chairperson

Animals and Gendered Nouns

Animals present an interesting situation for gendered nouns. Typically, there is one general term for the animal (for example, horse, tiger, goose). Nonetheless, for many species of animals we can distinguish between the male and female. Often, but not always, this is the case for animals that have been domesticated by humans.

animal	masculine	feminine
camel	bull	cow
cat	tom	queen
cattle	bull	cow
chicken	rooster	hen
duck	drake	duck
goat	billy	nanny
horse	stallion	mare
goose	gander	goose
lion	lion	lioness
pig	boar	sow
sheep	ram	ewe
tiger	tiger	tigress