Gender-Neutral Language

Before the era of social equality, the masculine nouns and pronouns stood in for situations where the gender of something was unclear or variable. Society now makes an effort to be gender neutral.

Pronouns

- There is no issue when the gender is certain.
- In non-specific gender situations, we can use:
  - "They" as in "If a student is sensitive in their writing, they are gender neutral."
    - Some argue that "they" is the default gender neutral pronoun
    - Perhaps it is best in plural situations
      - "If students can't agree on which pronoun to use, they can make the sentence with a plural subject."
  - "He or she" as in "Each student must take a position regarding his or her approach to the gender issue with nouns and pronouns. He or she must decide for him/herself."
- Alternate genders and pronouns
  - This works where the subject is equally likely to be male or female.
  - "A teacher can give freedom to a student to make up his own mind."
- Eliminate the pronoun altogether
  - "If someone uses masculine pronouns all the time, she is not up with the times."
    - This could become, "If someone always insists on masculine pronouns, that person can be considered culturally insensitive."

Nouns

- "Man" and words ending in "-man" can be "people" or "person" when used in a generic sense.
  - "All men were created equal" >> "all people were created equal."
  - Some examples of gender-neutral nouns
    - Man >> Person
    - Mankind >> People
    - Chairman >> Chair
    - Stewardess >> Flight Attendant

Other Considerations

- Refer to women subjects by only their last names.
  - Kate Chopin is not "Kate" but "Chopin"
- If writing about several people with the same name
  - Use the full name (George and Martha Washington)
- If a woman is titled, use the full title (Secretary Clinton)