

Using the Word "Guys"

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It's a new calendar year! The start of a new year brings with it an opportunity for reflection on the past and ways we can do better moving forward. The use of the word "guys" is an opportunity for reflection, and we can certainly do better with how we use the word.



Some may argue the word "guy" is gender neutral, as in "Alright guys, let's look at the first handout" when speaking to a gender-mixed audience. The Merriam-Webster dictionary even [defines guy](#) as "man, fellow" and the plural use of guy as "the members of a group regardless of sex." And yet, would we consider saying "Alright, gals, let's look at the first handout" for a gender-mixed audience? Would that feel inclusive?

The *Extension Professionals Creed* begins with "I believe in people...", which means being inclusive of all people is at our core. Words matter, but change is hard, so what other words can we use besides "guys"?

- "Alright, *everyone*, let's look at the first handout."
- "*Folks*, welcome to our program this evening."
- "It's been a while since I've seen a group of participants as motivated as *you all*."
- "*Friends*, it sounds like you are having some terrific conversation. For the sake of time, we need to move on to the next topic."

Are you still undecided about whether or not to use the word "guys" for a mixed-gender group? Consider some words you wouldn't use today to describe a person or group of people. Most of those words were probably at one time acceptable. When we know more, we can do more. Can you find ways to use more inclusive language this year?