

# Gender roles

ONE

## THE NEW FEMINIST IS MALE

Feminism is a misunderstood word. Even Marissa Mayer, the CEO of Yahoo, describes feminists as “militant” and having a “chip on the shoulder.” Off-putting as that sounds, both those descriptions are true. In 1968, 400 American women gathered outside the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to protest against enforced standards of femininity. They marched, held up posters, and threw pots, pans, aprons, false eyelashes and other female items into a “freedom trash can” to symbolically rid themselves of the constraints society placed on them. So, yes, feminism has a history of militancy.

As for the chip on the shoulder, feminists have that too. That is because feminists are underdogs; and like underdogs everywhere, they take umbrage easily. What is distressing is the number of young women who hesitate to embrace feminism, while enjoying its benefits. These are young college girls who enjoy the benefits that women before them have fought. Yet they hesitate to identify themselves with the movement.

Feminism needs to rid itself of its militancy in order to make it palatable to more young women. There is one way to do this: through men. Male involvement is necessary to legitimize and popularize the feminist movement. Hence the question: Are you a male feminist?

Earlier this year, 25 men in India wore skirts to protest the New Delhi gang rape; and the suggestion that it was the way women dressed that attracted sexual assault. When asked if any of the men consider themselves feminists, many said “yes.”

The man who co-organized the protest with his girlfriend echoed the views of most of these men. “Feminism means equality,” he said. “Treating women equally means that both the good and bad treatment are done away with. One should not restrict a woman from opening a door. She has every right to.”

I quite enjoy men opening doors for me, even though I consider myself a feminist. On the one hand, you can consider gestures such as opening the door for a lady to be small courtesies. On the other, they feed into the “man saving woman” idea that is the hallmark of most Disney movies and children’s stories ranging from *Cinderella* to *Snow White*. Why should men save women? Why can’t a woman take care of herself?

M.V. Rajeev Gowda, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management, is more cautious and reflects the view of many men I know. Although he is committed to the principles of gender equality, he says, he would hesitate to proclaim himself a feminist because “it seems like a loaded term with an element of confrontation built into it.” Gowda has organized protests against moral policing and wants to correct

women's under-representation in politics. "There are many people, especially men, who through their quiet actions and support for women's rights...are true feminists without the combative edge."

I know scores of men like this—fathers, sons and brothers. These are men who would hesitate to call themselves feminists even if they behave as if they are. This then is the way forward. Men aren't the enemy; they are allies. In order for feminism to continue to be relevant, men need to be part of the movement and the conversation. We need their help to take the negative edge off this term. We need men to make feminism cool.

Are you a male feminist?

- Published in the *Wall Street Journal*, written by Shoba Narayan.

## DAD WEARS SKIRT IN SOLIDARITY WITH HIS 5-YEAR-OLD SON

When it comes to supporting his son's unconventional wardrobe, Nils Pickert talks the talk *and* walks the walk.

The German dad said that he wears women's clothes (including nail polish) to help his 5-year-old son feel good about going out in dresses and skirts.

A picture of Pickert and his little boy, sporting matching red clothes -- dad in a long skirt, son in a spaghetti-strap dress -- has been making the Internet rounds, inspiring enough positive feedback to cancel out a thousand sideways looks and gender marketing fails.



Pickert says that in the small town where he lives, his son's dress choices are seen as everybody's business -- and when it comes to standing up for his son, he's determined to show, not just tell. He writes:

Yes, I'm one of those dads who try to raise their children equal. I'm not one of those academic daddies that ramble about gender equality during their studies and then, as soon as a child's in the house, still relapse into those fluffy gender roles. Thus I am, I know that by now, part of the minority that makes a fool of themselves from time to time. Out of conviction.

Pickert is not the only parent to speak up for a child whose dress preferences stand out from the norm. American mom Cheryl Kilodavis, who wrote the picture book *My Princess Boy* about her son Dyson, was on television to discuss the importance of accepting children for who they are -- no matter what they wear. "Sooner or later my hope is that the world will embrace the uniqueness that is really within all of us," she said.

Pickert says that he chose to become the "role model" he knew his son needed. Chances are his actions will set an example not just for kids, but for parents, too.

- Published in the *Huffington Post*, no author listed.

**Find the word(s) that best match the definition provided from the two articles.**

1. To seem angry all the time because you think you have been treated (expression).
2. Provoking uneasiness or dislike.
3. A limitation or restriction.
4. A person who has little status in society.
5. Offense or annoyance.
6. Acceptable or satisfactory.
7. Declare something one considers important.
8. An indefinitely large number.
9. To talk or write endlessly, usually without a point.
10. A firmly held belief or opinion.



**Aims:** Understanding the task | Understanding visual prompts  
Overview of the writing task and process | Analysing the question

## Part 1: Vocabulary

- 1 Many people believe that men and women are different in fundamental ways. Decide which words are commonly associated with men and which words with women.

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| a aggressive    | e gentle     |
| b authoritative | f strong     |
| c competitive   | g vulnerable |
| d compliant     |              |



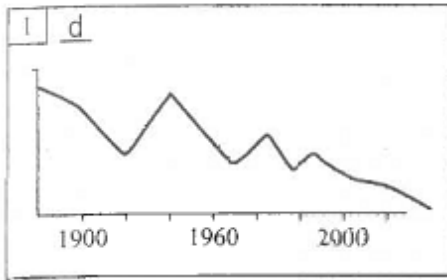
- 2 A knowledge of abstract nouns is essential for academic writing. Complete the sentences 1–6 with the noun form (singular or plural) of the adjectives in brackets.

Example: *Aggression* is commonly considered a masculine trait. (aggressive)

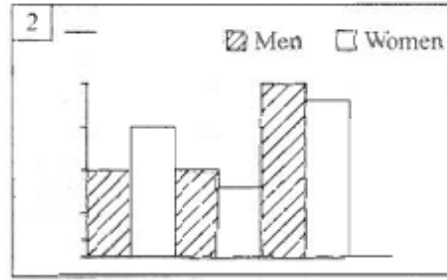
- 1 I believe that men and women have different \_\_\_\_\_. (strong)
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ is not an exclusively feminine characteristic. (gentle)
- 3 Many men have difficulty showing \_\_\_\_\_. (vulnerable)
- 4 Some people have difficulty working with female \_\_\_\_\_ figures. (authoritative)
- 5 Women are often praised for \_\_\_\_\_, whereas men are praised for leadership. (compliant)
- 6 There is some evidence that girls are better at cooperation, while boys are happier when they are in \_\_\_\_\_ with one another. (competitive)

- 3 In Writing Task 1, you have to summarise information which is usually presented in a visual form. Match the figures 1–6 with the headings a–f. Then complete the descriptions with the words i–ix. The first one has been done for you.

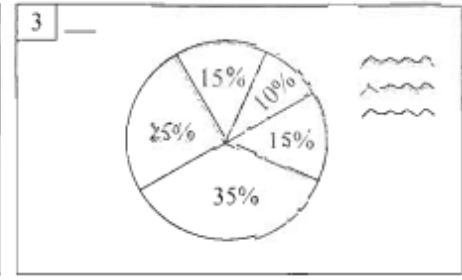
- |               |              |               |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| a bar chart   | c flow chart | e pie chart   |
| b diagram     | d line graph | f table       |
| i comparisons | iv trends    | vii segment   |
| ii axis       | v percentage | viii features |
| iii columns   | vi vertical  | ix stage      |



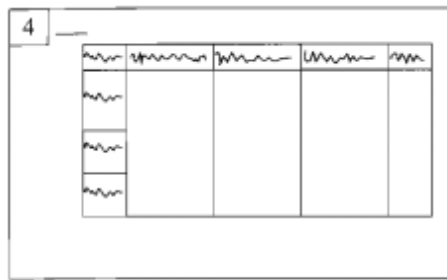
This type of figure can be used to show (7) iv. The horizontal (8) \_\_\_\_\_ often indicates time, and the (9) \_\_\_\_\_ axis often shows what changes over time.



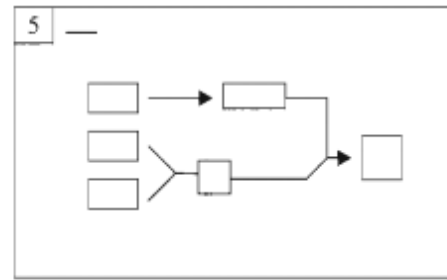
These figures are useful for illustrating (10) \_\_\_\_\_ between items or categories of items. This one compares men and women.



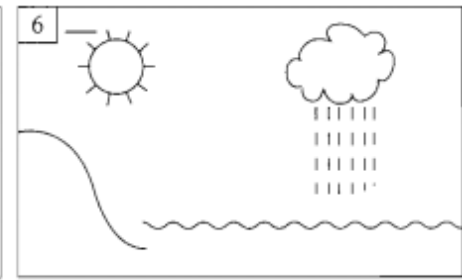
You can use a figure like this to show how a whole is composed of parts. Here, each (11) \_\_\_\_\_ indicates a (12) \_\_\_\_\_ of the whole.



You should present data like this if you need to give precise numbers. This example contains four rows and five (13) \_\_\_\_\_.



This type of figure is useful for representing a process. Each box represents one (14) \_\_\_\_\_ in the process.



Figures like this are also used to represent a process. They can also illustrate the (15) \_\_\_\_\_ of an object.

**4** In Writing Task 2, you have to write an essay discussing opinions and the reasons for holding these opinions. Complete the Task 2 essay questions 1–5 with the words a–e.

- a** agree      **b** consider      **c** feel      **d** see      **e** view

- 1 Many people think that boys and girls learn better when they are educated separately. How do you \_\_\_\_\_ about this view?
- 2 In your \_\_\_\_\_, what should be done to promote equality of opportunity for men and women?
- 3 Do you \_\_\_\_\_ boys to be naturally more aggressive than girls?
- 4 Many people argue that governments should intervene in the labour market to ensure that more women are promoted to positions of power. To what extent do you \_\_\_\_\_ with this practice?
- 5 What do you \_\_\_\_\_ as the main reasons for gender inequality in the workplace?