

## INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN FRENCH

In French, *l'écriture inclusive* is difficult to achieve due to the gendered nature of the language. This is especially difficult in spoken language. However, those in favour of using inclusive language have proposed several ideas<sup>1</sup>:

1. For example, one way to be more inclusive in French writing is using both the masculine and feminine forms rather than maintaining the 'masculine as neutral' rule. This can take several different forms.

Words such as '**étudiant**' can take the following forms:

→ *étudiant.e*; *étudiant-e*; *étudiant·e*  
 → *étudiant.e.s* ; *étudiant-e.s* ; *étudiant·e.s* ; *étudiant-es*

Words such as '**chercheur**' can take differ forms:

It is possible to see the word 'chercheur' declined as such:

→ *chercheur.e*; *chercheur-e* ; *chercheur·e*  
 → *chercheur.e.s* ; *chercheur-e.s* ; *chercheur·e.s*;

However, departing from the etymological root of the word, the preferred feminine version of the word is 'chercheuse' rather than 'chercheure'. As such, can also be declined as follows:

→ *chercheur.euse*; *chercheureuse* (*which is audible*)  
 → *chercheur.euses*; *chercheureuses*

This version is also more inclusive for non-binary people.

Words such as '**auteur**' can take the different forms:

It is possible to see the word 'auteur' declined as such:

→ *auteur.e*; *auteur-e*; *auteur·e*

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<sup>1</sup> This guide has been co-created by SMLC students and staff as part of the project 'Decolonising Babel: Multilingual and Inclusive Language Pedagogies at Warwick and Beyond', led by Dr Valentina Abbatelli and Dr Leticia Villamediana González and funded by IATL at Warwick University.

→ *auteur.e.s; auteur-e-s; auteur.e-s*

However, departing from the etymological root of the word, the preferred feminine version of the word is ‘autrice’ rather than ‘auteure’. As such, it can be declined as follows:

→ *auteur-ice; auteur-ice; auteurice (which is audible)*

→ *auteur-ices; auteur-ices; auteurices*

This version is also more inclusive for non-binary people.

Note here that one previous way of writing more inclusively was to use brackets to achieve this effect, e.g. ‘étudiant(e)’. This has since been rejected as the brackets were seen so show the feminine form as secondary to that of the male.

2. Another way people have adapted their language to become more inclusive is the usage of feminine job titles that are usually uncommon or have been erased from history.

→	elle	est	ingénieur	→	ingénieure
→	elle	est	maire	→	mairesse
→	elle est auteur → elle est autrice				
→	Madame le Président → Madame la Présidente				

3. Furthermore, we learn as French speakers that “le masculin l’ emporte sur le féminin”.

The rule goes as follows:

→	100	women	=	use	of	the	pronom	“elles”
→	100	men	=	use	of	the	pronom	“ils”
→	99 women, 1 man = use of the pronom “ils”							

However, some people have proposed that we should simply use the pronoun that represents the majority. If there are 99 women and just one man, it seems to make sense that we would use the feminine pronoun “elles”. Accordingly, it is now recommended to address groups either by referring to the feminine and the masculine. For example, it is now becoming common practice to say ‘chères voyageuses, chers voyageurs’ instead of ‘chers voyageurs’. Similarly, to avoid the use of the dominant masculine, it is recommended to use gender neutral terms such as ‘l’équipe’ instead of ‘les joueurs’.

4. Finally, some French speakers who do not identify with feminine pronouns “elle-elles” (she/her-they), nor masculine ‘il-ils’ (he-they) have started to use other



pronouns that they feel best suits their identity. The most common ones are “*iel-iels*” (pronounced “yel”). This also works with pronouns as ‘*celles/ceux*’ become ‘*celleux*’.

For example, in English we might say “They went to the shop with their dog.” In French this could become ‘*l’el est allé.e au supermarché avec son chien*’.

**Further resources:**

- [How to Be Inclusive in French - Chatterblog \(chatterbug.com\)](https://www.chatterbug.com)
- [Écriture inclusive — Mots-Clés \(motscles.net\)](https://motscles.net)
- [encluf.fr](https://encluf.fr) – An online dictionary which generates the inclusive version of the desired word.