

SUZANNE WERTHEIM, PHD

How does calling a  
pilot a “stewardess”  
violate the principles  
of inclusive  
language?

SCROLL RIGHT TO SEE





# 1. Reflect reality

Talking to a pilot as if she is a flight attendant does not reflect the reality that many commercial pilots are women.

Or that this particular woman is, in fact, a pilot.





## 2. Show respect

Asking a pilot who is testifying about her work conditions what a typical week is like for her “as a stewardess” is disrespectful.

It demotes her from a highly technical and high-prestige job to a job that is seen as tending to and serving people. (Aka “women’s work.”)





## 2. Show respect

Also, “stewardess” is not the modern or respectful term.

It is “flight attendant.”

“Stewardess” is like calling someone an “authoress” or a “poetess.” It’s outdated and really highlights that it is a woman doing the work (and not in a good way.)





### 3. Draw people in

Referring to a pilot as if she is a “stewardess” (again, should be “flight attendant”) marginalizes her from her profession. In fact, it pushes her right over the margins and out of her profession altogether.

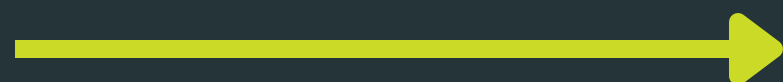




## 4. Incorporate other perspectives

If a woman is testifying about her work as a pilot, then talking to her as if she is a flight attendant is not incorporating her perspective.

It also suggests that the perspective that women have no place in technical and demanding jobs is correct and reasonable.





# 5. Prevent erasure

Being unable to recognize that a woman is a pilot erases female pilots.

This is true whether the confusion is a genuine mistake because of a biased mental model, or if it is just tacky political theater.

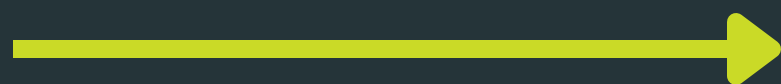




# 6. Recognize pain points

Possibly EVERY woman in a technical or prestigious role has a story where she was disrespected, marginalized, presumed incompetent, unconsciously demoted, or more. These stories are PAINFUL.

Calling a pilot a “stewardess” is certain to cause pain not only for the pilot in question, but also for other women who have lived through similar insults.





Just one phrase,  
even one without a  
“bad word,” can  
violate every single  
principle of  
inclusive language.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PRINCIPLES OF  
INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN **THE INCLUSIVE  
LANGUAGE FIELD GUIDE**, AVAILABLE  
EVERYWHERE BOOKS ARE SOLD.