Use and Abuse of Language

1. Saying the Decent Thing

AVOID	USE INSTEAD	WHY?
he... / she ... her	**they / their / your / (one's)**	Inclusive personal pronouns make everyone feel included
Everyone does his best.	People do **their** best**.**	
Everybody must do his share.	Individuals must do **their** share**.**	
To each his own.	To each what they are due.	
mankind	**people / humankind / human beings**	The word "man" makes you think of males only, e. g.: *"In ancient times man made tools from flint stone."*
manpower	**workforce / labour force / staff**	
man-hours	**working hours**	
man-made	**artificial / synthetic / manufactured**	
man-to-man	**person-to-person, personally**	The following sounds curious: *"A hen lays eggs, while man breast-feeds his young."*
manned by / to man	**staffed by / to staff**	
businessman	**executive**	But**:** In German you often use the German word "man" if you speak in general terms.
chairman / cameraman	**chairperson / chair / camera operator**	
fireman / policeman	**fire fighter / police officer**	
statesman	**politician / leader**	
landlady, landlord	**property owner, cabin flight attendant, actor, manager etc.**	Unnecessary female forms discriminate against one sex.

2. Politically Correct but Unclear
Circle the words that you find both clear as well as polite.

		insulting blunt ⇨ plain ⇨ sensible ⇨ polite ⇨ politically correct ⇨ misleading
age	**'old'**	past it ⇨ aged ⇨ elderly ⇨ senior citizen ⇨ getting on ⇨ experienced ⇨ mature
physique	**'fat'**	pudgy ⇨ obese ⇨ portly ⇨ stocky ⇨ stout ⇨ overweight ⇨ generously proportioned
	'blind'	partially sighted ⇨ unsighted ⇨ sightless ⇨ differently sighted ⇨ visually challenged ⇨ other-visioned
	'die'	kick the bucket ⇨ croak ⇨ perish ⇨ decease ⇨ expire ⇨ pass away ⇨ move on to a better place
	'disability'	cripple ⇨ handicapped ⇨ disabled ⇨ incapacitated ⇨ debilitated ⇨ debilitated ⇨ restricted ⇨ physically challenged
pol.	**'terrorist'**	insurgent ⇨ paramilitary ⇨ revolutionary ⇨ guerrilla ⇨ rebel ⇨ separatist ⇨ freedom fighter
	'war'	invasion ⇨ conflict ⇨ military intervention ⇨clash ⇨ struggle ⇨ defence ⇨ peace mission

3. Rewrite in Politically Correct Language
Avoid aggression, gender bias and racism.

Whoever knows the answer, will he please raise his hand?	… will **they** please raise **their** hands?
This country needs more successful businessmen.	… business**people**
Meryl Streep is a great actress…	…a great actor.
How many man-hours will this job take?	How many **working hours**…
If man takes his brother's life, by man shall his life be taken.	If someone is not happy about another individual, **they** should be encouraged to verbalise their grudge, engage in a discussion and resolve any conflict peacefully.

4. Food for Thought
List examples of weasel words that mean whatever the powerful want them to mean.

[...] "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master – that's all." [...]

Carroll, Lewis: Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There