
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Male and female job words



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Catherine

Hi! Welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. My name is Catherine, and I'm here with Rob.

Rob

Hello everyone. Today we're going to be talking about different words for jobs, and especially how those words change depending on whether a man or a woman is doing the job.

Catherine

Yes, and listen carefully because we're going to give you a quick quiz.

Rob

And then you'll get a tip to help with your vocabulary learning.

Catherine

Right, so let's get started! First we're going to listen to listen to Joe, talking about how he met his girlfriend, Judith.

Rob

While you listen, here's a question for you to think about: what is Judith's job now? Listen carefully!

INSERT

Joe

Well, I used to be an **actor**, and I met Judith at work. We were doing a play about a **policeman**, who falls in love with a **waitress**. I played the **policeman**, and Judith played the **waitress** – and sure enough, we fell in love! Later, I quit acting, and now I'm a **businessman**. But Judith has a successful acting career – right now, she's on a film shoot: she's playing a **firefighter**!

Catherine

So, the question was: what is Judith's job now?

Rob

And the answer is, Judith is an **actress**. Right now, she's making a film.

Catherine

The first job that Joe mentioned was **actor**. Now, this is one of those jobs where the word changes, depending on whether a man or a woman is doing the job. So, we say that a man is an **actor**, but a woman is an **actress**.

Rob

That's right. When Joe met Judith, she was playing a **waitress**. Again, we can say a man is a **waiter**, and a woman is a **waitress**.

Catherine

Yeah, so we've got **actor, actress; waiter, waitress**. You can hear the pattern, can't you?

Rob

I can, yes. Judith was playing a **waitress** in the play, but can you remember what Joe was playing? Listen again:

INSERT 1 CLIP 1

We were doing a play about a **policeman**, who falls in love with a **waitress**.

Catherine

Right, so Joe was playing a policeman, and we say that a man is a **policeman**, and a woman is a **policewoman**.

Rob

Now, Joe is a businessman because he's a man. But for a woman, we can say **businesswoman**.

Catherine

Yeah, so **policeman, policewoman; businessman, businesswoman**. Easy, isn't it?

Rob

Well maybe it's not quite so easy, because we know that Judith is making a film right now, but do you remember what sort of character she is playing? Listen again and check:

INSERT 1 CLIP 2

But Judith has a successful acting career – right now, she's on a film shoot: she's playing a **firefighter**!

Catherine

OK, so Judith is playing a **firefighter**.

Rob

But wait, hold on a minute Catherine, there's something strange about that word, **firefighter**.

Catherine

Yes, Indeed. A **waiter** is a man, and a **policewoman** is a woman. What about a **firefighter**? Man or woman? What is it?

Rob

Well, in fact, the word **firefighter** is the same for a man or a woman. More and more, in modern English, people prefer to use words for jobs which are the same for both sexes.

Catherine

They do. For example, some people prefer not to use the word **actress**. They just like to use the word **actor** for a man or a woman.

Rob

And instead of **policeman** or **policewoman**, we can say **police officer**. That's good for a man or a woman, too.

Catherine

And that's why we say **firefighter**. We don't say fireman, firewoman, we just use **firefighter** these days for everyone.

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6 Minute Vocabulary from BBC Learning English.

Catherine

And we're talking about job words that change depending on whether a man or a woman is doing the job...

Rob

...and job words that are the same for both men and women.

Catherine

Those are my preferred options, what about you Rob?

Rob

I think it's easier and less complicated, yes, to use those sort of generic words.

Catherine

Yeah, like **presenter**.

Rob

Like **presenter**. Not 'presenteress' or anything like that.

Catherine

Indeed. And some job titles that used to be different for men and women are now being replaced by a single job title for both sexes. For example on planes, in the past, we used to have **stewards** and **stewardesses** looking after the passengers. Now we just have, Rob...

Rob

Flight attendants. And instead of a **chairman** or a **chairwoman** in charge of a formal meeting, these days we often hear the word **chairperson**.

Catherine

Or just **chair**.

Rob

OK.

Catherine

Right, so now it's time to see how much you can remember. And we've got three quiz questions for you. Number one: if the word for a man is **businessman**, what's the word for a woman?

Rob

And the answer is **businesswoman**. Second, if the word for a woman is **waitress**, what's the word for a man?

Catherine

Waiter! Right, and just one more question: if a man can be a **policeman**, and a woman can be a **policewoman**, what's the word that's equally good for a man or a woman?

Rob

It's **police officer!** Did you get all those right? Well done if you did!

Catherine

And before we go, here's a top tip to help you learn your vocabulary more effectively.

Rob

When you're out and about, walking down the street, or sitting on the bus, notice the people you see, and say the words for them to yourself in English - like **waitress** or **police officer**.

Catherine

Or **presenter**.

Rob

Indeed.

Catherine

There's more about this at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again soon for more 6 Minute Vocabulary. Bye!

Rob

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away

| For a man: | For a woman: | For a man or a woman: |
|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| actor | actress | actor |
| waiter | waitress | (sometimes) waiter |
| policeman | policewoman | police officer |
| businessman | businesswoman | (sometimes) businessperson |
| chairman | chairwoman | chairperson / chair |
| fireman | (sometimes) firewoman | firefighter |
| presenter | presenter | presenter |
| steward | stewardess | flight attendant |