

# FIBA PORTRAYAL GUIDELINES

**GENDER EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE  
REPRESENTATION IN BASKETBALL**





# INTRODUCTION

***SPORT IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL PLATFORMS FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND SPORTS COVERAGE IS VERY INFLUENTIAL IN SHAPING NORMS AND STEREOTYPES OF WOMEN/GIRLS AND MEN/BOYS. BASKETBALL IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR SPORTS ON THE PLANET AND FIBA HAS A BIG RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT BOTH GENDERS ARE REPRESENTED FAIRLY AND EQUALLY.***

As leaders and communicators within the sports movement, we can set the tone as to how women and girls in sports, and players – globally – can and should be depicted, described, talked about, represented, and portrayed, across all forms of media and communication channels.





# TERMS TO KNOW

## SEX

assigned at birth and refers to the biological characteristics that define a person as female, male or intersex (World Health Organization).

## GENDER

refers to socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society assigns to women and men (UN Women).

## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

an association or attitude about a person or social group formed beyond our control and awareness (Catalyst 2019).

## GENDER STEREOTYPES

preconceived ideas on women's and men's traditionally assigned roles, attributes, and characteristics. For example, the role of women being confined to the domestic and family sphere (OHCHR 2014). Negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes ultimately perpetuate gender inequality and hold back change (UN Women 2020).

## GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

when the language being used is not gender specific (EIGE 2018), meaning with no specific reference to a particular sex or social gender but rather considering people in general. Using gender-neutral or gender inclusive language avoids words and expressions which could be interpreted as biased, discriminatory, or sexist, instead placing women and men at the same level, and helping reduce gender stereotypes (UN Women 2017).

## GENDER BALANCE IN COMMUNICATION

the process of integrating a gender perspective or lens into all aspects of an organization's strategies and initiatives, and into its culture, systems, operations, and communications. Applying a gender lens means factoring how your decisions impact genders differently.

## GENDER BIAS

prejudiced actions or thoughts that affect a person or a group of people based on their perceived gender. Gender biased language either implicitly/unconsciously or explicitly/consciously favors one gender over another, leading to unequal and/or unfair treatment. It is a form of gender discrimination (EIGE 2018).





# BALANCED PORTRAYAL PRACTICES

## CONTENT AND EDITORIAL

Research shows that there are fundamental differences in the treatment between genders in sport. This is clear in the under-representation of women in sport, in particular with the global coverage of women's sports, the implication that men's sport is the norm, and the emphasis of gender focus first for women, e.g. first female coach.

Clearly, it is not possible to anticipate gender representation in news and current events. All content needs to be based on editorial merit. However, we can strengthen our storytelling around women's basketball and female players, coaches, and referees to enhance visibility and consistency of coverage, introduce new voices and build a following. We also need to be sensitive to gender in the way in which the content is packaged and presented in relation to tone, style, language, framing, and imagery. Additionally, we can ensure a more even spread of content is given to both genders, both editorially and on social media channels.

The following should be adhered to by FIBA, including regions:

- 1.** Clear and balanced editorial direction and tone of content
- 2.** Consistency is key across both genders across editorial and social media content
- 3.** Bold and compelling story to build followers





# BALANCED PORTRAYAL PRACTICES

## IMAGERY

Basketball is portrayed through still and moving images. These should reflect the diversity of the players, fans, referees, coaches, staff, volunteers, and conscious efforts should be made to ensure that there is a balance in the quality and quantity of portrayal of genders on tv, web, or social media platforms.

Keep these guidelines in mind:

- Active, authentic, and respectful visual imagery (which portrays players in their environment).
- Avoid passive, sexy imagery of players which reinforces stereotypes.
- Athleticism and sporting prowess should be the focus of the imagery.
- Do not focus unnecessarily on looks, in comparison to the men's coverage, clothing or intimate body parts (e.g. crotch shots, cleavage, backsides), especially if it does not relate to a player's performance.
- Capture diversity among all players in terms of gender and other dimensions such as ethnicity or age.
- Ensure there are not significantly more images of one gender or ethnicity in relation to the other.

## LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

Special attention should be paid to the use of language (expressions and communication) and terminology (vocabulary) in commentary, headlines, or articles in print or digital.

- Use bias-free language and avoid gender stereotypes, expressions or words that compare women to men and/or imply the superiority of one gender over the other.

### Examples:

- ✗ She plays like a man
- ✓ She has incredible handles
- ✗ She's the next LeBron
- ✓ She's an extraordinary player
- ✗ It's going to be a 'catfight'
- ✓ It's going to be a tough battle between two strong competitors

- It is legitimate to refer to an individual's gender (e.g. she/he, him/her) when referring to a specific person. However, it is advised to use neutral descriptions when referring to a mixed group.

### Examples:

- His/Her ✗ Their ✓
- Her/Him ✗ Them ✓





# GENERAL PRINCIPLES

## WHEN REFERRING TO PEOPLE

always use 'female/male', 'women/men' and not 'girls/boys', unless referring to minors.

- ✗ The use of "ladies" is inappropriate when "men" is being used. The term should be women. The same applies for using the term "girls" when "men" is being used.
- ✓ Ladies is appropriate when used with the term Gentlemen, as in a speech: "Ladies and Gentlemen"; or when it is an official title, e.g. "Sir John and Lady Smith".

## PRONOUNS,

when referring to a mixed-gender group, the neutral plural should be used, they/them/their.

**For example:**

- ✗ Each player must always have his accreditation on him.
- ✓ All players are required to always have their accreditation on them.
- ✓ The player is required to always have their accreditation on them

**Nouns and proper names**, where possible, use gender-neutral terms, for example:

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| ✗ Sportsman                               | ✓ Sportsperson / Player         |
| ✗ Anchorman                               | ✓ Anchor                        |
| ✗ Spokesman                               | ✓ Spokesperson                  |
| ✗ Cameraman / Cameramen                   | ✓ Camera operator / Camera crew |
| ✗ Chairman                                | ✓ Chair / Chairperson           |
| ✗ Mankind                                 | ✓ Humankind / Humanity          |
| ✗ Boyfriend / Girlfriend / Husband / Wife | ✓ Partner / Spouse              |

## ADJECTIVES

Avoid making evaluative comments on an individual's appearance. When describing a player's performance, use adjectives that apply to both women and men.

For instance:

- Use words such as: beautiful, powerful, strong, graceful, athletic, determined, dominant.
- Not gendered or sexist descriptions e.g. sexy, girly, manly, like a man, etc.
- Some basketball terminology is gender specific, e.g. 'man-to-man defense' instead use 'one-on-one defense'.





# GENERAL PRINCIPLES

## INTERVIEWS AND COMMENTARY

Interviews with players or coaches or commentating must ensure that there is no gender-driven questions and statements.

For example: when interviewing a female player, avoid asking about her husband/partner/children, unless she volunteers the information herself. Interviewers seldom ask male players whether their wives/partners/children are proud of them.

Commentary teams must represent a mix of genders and backgrounds, for both men's and women's events.

## COVERAGE AND AIRTIME

FIBA believes that women's and men's events are of equal importance, and this should be reflected in their treatment. It is therefore important to show and celebrate sporting journeys and achievements – irrespective of gender, race or sexual orientation – with the same passion, respect and consistency throughout the year, and beyond.

In broadcast activities – coverage of events, interviews, player profiles, commentary, etc. – ensure as much as possible that **equal airtime and coverage are devoted to women's and men's basketball.**

When preparing articles and publications, both print and digital, as far as possible women and men should be given equal exposure to ensure that the reporting is balanced between the different genders. Avoid excessive focus on only one gender.

The quality of production for women's and men's sports coverage and the presentation of players **should be equal.** Neither gender should be favored.





# CHECKLIST

## CONTENT & EDITORIAL

Equal editorial attention, where possible:

- Are there considerably more stories and profiles of one gender over another?
- How are you framing your questions and storytelling? Consider if they are gender-driven or sport-driven.
- Are you packaging your content and presenting women's and men's sport with the same enthusiasm and quality?

## IMAGERY

Balanced and steering away from gender stereotypes:

- Is there a gender balance across the images being used?
- Are women represented in an active and empowered position, and equally visible and prominent?
- Is the focus of the images on performance and basketball instead of aesthetics?

## WORDING

Using neutral language that can be used for all individuals and groups of individuals:

- Are you using masculine forms (he/him) in generic references, i.e. when referring to an unspecified group of people? Or being gender-neutral (they/them)?
- Are you using descriptive words and expressions that can apply to anyone?
- Are you comparing genders, or implying the superiority of one gender over another?

## VOICES

Diversify storytellers and propose gender-balanced and diverse panels, spokespeople, trainers, role models, etc.

- What voices are being heard and in what capacity (e.g. as an authority or expert)?
- Are women and minority voices speaking for themselves?
- Are your storytellers from different genders and backgrounds?





# CONCLUSION

*DIVERSE AND EMPOWERING PORTRAYALS OF PLAYERS, COACHES, OFFICIALS, AND ALL THOSE WHO MAKE UP THE FIBA FAMILY HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON PARTICIPATION RATES IN BASKETBALL, COACHING AND LEADERSHIP.*

*BY ENSURING FIBA IS SPEAKING IN ONE VOICE, AND IN A VOICE THAT IS GENDER NEUTRAL, WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW AND TAP INTO NEW AUDIENCES AND GENERATE MORE INTEREST AND ENGAGEMENT, IN PARTICULAR AMONG THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS AND PLAYERS.*

