



MISS, MRS., MS., MISS, MRS., MS., AND... MISTER

Somewhere early in our education, students are expected to master an important life skill: correctly addressing adults. Specifically, female teachers. This task sounds simple until you realize there are three options, none of which come with clear instructions, and all of which carry the potential for awkwardness.

There's Miss, Mrs., and Ms. Each one looks similar.

Each one sounds similar. Each one means something different. And somehow, choosing the wrong one feels like breaking an unspoken social law. Is it about marriage? Age? Preference? Vibes? No one really knows, but everyone agrees that guessing incorrectly is a mistake you will remember forever.

Students often stand frozen at their desks, mentally speed-running every possible option before speaking. Some avoid the problem entirely by saying nothing. Others commit, say the wrong one, and immediately experience regret. The teacher will usually be kind about it, but the damage is done. You will think about it later that night for no reason at all.

Meanwhile, the system for men is remarkably efficient. There is one title. Mr. That's it. No guessing, no social calculus, no existential dread. You say it, and you move on with your life. It does not reveal personal information. It does not change based on marital status. It just works.

This raises an important question: why is there only one option for men, but an entire linguistic obstacle course for women? Why do students have to consider someone's personal life just to ask to go to the bathroom? Why is this a daily source of low-level panic?

At this point, it feels reasonable to simplify things. If men get one title, women should too—or at least a system that doesn't require a flowchart. Until then, students will continue to hesitate before speaking, choose at random, and hope for the best.

As for Mr.? I'm done abbreviating it. From now on, I'm spelling it out. Mister. If we're going to commit to titles, we might as well be dramatic about it.

