

Inclusive Language Guide

Overview:

Many of us don't realize that the language we use may have additional meaning hidden between the lines. Using inclusive language in written and verbal communications can help ensure our messaging resonates across audiences and doesn't unintentionally exclude anyone. Being aware of inclusive language can help you avoid biases, slang or expressions that may inadvertently discriminate against groups of people. Language is powerful and adjusting the words and phrases we use every day can support shifting mindsets and creating a society that is more inclusive.

These recommendations to speak and write in more impartial ways are provided as guidelines and aren't meant to censor expression, but rather to improve the accuracy and clarity of our communication.

General Guidelines:

Below are some general guidelines for developing including communications:

- Use plain language in your communication rather than expressions or jargon, as many idioms are culturally specific.
- The word "female" has been used in various context to devalue women, and as a result, has taken on a number of negative connotations. Avoid using "female" as an adjective when referring to humans. Use "woman" and "women" instead.
- Avoid gender-biased expressions or expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes, i.e., she throws like a girl, men just don't understand.

Inclusive Language Examples:

Gender inclusive terms	
Instead of ...	Consider ..
you guys (when addressing a group)	you all, everyone
ladies and gentlemen	folks, colleagues, esteemed guests, volunteers, members, etc.
the common man	the average person
manpower	workforce, staffing, workers
mailman	postal worker
man-made	artificial, handmade, synthetic
man vs the moon	humankind vs the moon
Race, Ethnicity & Nationality terms	
minorities	marginalized or underrepresented groups
the elderly, elderly people, seniors	older adults, persons over the age of 65, older people, the older population

negro, colored	Black, African American
Spanish (for people not from Spain)	Latino, Latina, Latinx, Latine, Hispanic, Latin American
brown	refer to their race (e.g., Asian) or ethnicity (e.g., Hispanic/Latino), instead
natives	indigenous, aboriginal, first nations in US
spirit animal	kindred spirit, patronus
tribe	crew, group, squad
powwow	meeting, gathering
native	innate, built-in
low man on the totem pole	junior level, less senior
Sexuality, Gender Identify and Gender Expression Terms	
wife, husband, girlfriend, boyfriend	Partner, significant other/so
sexual preference, same-sex attractions, sexual identity	sexual orientation
admitted homosexual, avowed homosexual, openly gay	out gay man, out gay person, out lesbian
biologically male/female, genetically male/female, born a man/women	assigned male/female at birth
transgendered, transsexual	transgender person
sex change, sex reassignment, sex-change operation	transition, gender affirmation
Disability Terms	
wheelchair-bound	person who uses a wheelchair
suffering from	living with
crazy/insane	unbelievable, outlandish, outrageous, over the top, egregious, irrational, etc.
lame (not referring to a person)	boring, outdated
normal	typical
sanity check	confidence check
mentally ill	person living with a mental health condition, person with a mental disorder, person with a mental illness
special needs, physically challenged, mentally challenged, handi-capable, handicapped person, physically disabled person, disabled	person with a disability, person who has a disability, people with intellectual disabilities, child with a congenital disability, child with a birth impairment, person with a physical disability. Note: the terms above all lead with person-first language. However, some members of this community prefer to use the identify-first term “disabled person.” When in doubt, always ask the individual how they would like to be referenced.

person with deafness, person who is deaf	deaf person Note: Although it's often recommended to lead with person-first language, the Deaf community prefer the term 'deaf person.' Lowercase deaf when referring to the condition and capitalize Deaf when referring to the community.
hearing-impaired person, person who is hearing impaired, hard-of-hearing person, person with deafness and blindness	person with hearing loss, person who is hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind person
person with blindness, visually challenged	blind person, person who is blind, visually impaired person, vision-impaired person, person who is visually impaired, person who vision impaired
disabled (when referring to a system)	deactivated, broken
Social Cultural, Religious and other terms	
master (like a master document)	primary
master/slide (in IT terminology)	control plane/control plane node, controller/doer, primary/replica, primary/secondary
blacklist	exclusion list, block list
whitelist	allowed list, included list
bible	primary document, main resource, guide
mecca	hotspot, hub
victim, survivor	person who has experienced ... person who has been impacted by ...
class	socioeconomic status
homeless person	person without housing, unhoused individual
the poor, low-class people, blue collar	people whose incomes are below the federal poverty threshold, people whose self-reported incomes were in the lowest income bracket
uppity	arrogant, conceited