

Inclusive Language **Style Guide**

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General Guidelines to Reduce Discrimination

- Call people what they prefer to be called.
- Whenever possible, use specific terms to refer to an individual or group of people.
- Avoid labeling/objectifying people.
- Avoid categorizing people with noun forms (e.g., schizophrenics, the elderly). Use adjectival construction or put the person first (e.g., a person diagnosed with schizophrenia).
- Be aware of in-group vs. out-group naming. There are terms used within groups that might be acceptable for group members that are not acceptable for use by those outside the group.
- Avoid the suffix “-man,” including the word “freshman” (use “first-year student”); likewise, avoid “mankind” (use “humans,” or “humankind”).
- “Gender” is a cultural construct; “sex” is biological.
 - “Gender” is taken to refer to a culturally based complex of norms, values, and behaviors that a particular culture assigns to one biological sex or another.
 - “Sex” refers to the physical differences between people who are male, female, or intersex. A person typically has their sex assigned at birth based on physiological characteristics, including their genitalia and chromosome composition.
- When a person’s chosen pronouns are known, use them.
- Use parallel construction and the same level of specificity when comparing groups of people—Black and white/White, African American and European American (not, e.g., Asian Americans and Black, because one group is described by color and the other is described by cultural heritage)

Understanding Power and Creating Safe Spaces

- What is power?
 - Formal Power: Power derived from a job title or position within an organization
 - Informal Power: Power derived from less clear avenues
 - Experiential Power: Power based on experiences, trainings, and studies
 - Relational Power: Power stemming from connections you have to others
 - Cultural/Systemic Power: A group's ability to create and benefit from laws, institutions, and having access to decision-makers
 - Circumstantial/Majority Power: Being surrounded by those who hold the same beliefs, values, and identities as you
- How is power used?
 - Power Over vs. Power With
 - Power Over: When power is used to control another person or group and is often seen in traditional hierarchies. Those who have power set the standards and policies with which others who do not have power must comply.
 - Power With: Utilizes our personal power to create space for and empower others to share their perspectives and experiences.
- Using Power and Creating Safe Spaces
 - Reflect on your own power and privilege - especially when serving as a gatekeeper or decision maker for others
 - Demonstrate cultural awareness and respect for the identities of those you are working with by engaging in conversations about identity and language preferences
 - Establish yourself as an ally and allow space for the sharing of personal experiences without judgment or pity

Language Guide

Race and Ethnicity

Key:

Use

Use with Caution

Avoid

Term / Phrase	Alternatives	Explanation
Aboriginal People	N/A	Always Capitalize
African American English (AAE)	African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Black English (BE)	Avoid: "Ebonics," "slang" (in reference to AAE terms), "informal English"
African American	Black	Term is not always accurate; not all Black people identify as African American.
Afro American; Afro-American	Black	Outdated, inappropriate to use.
Alaska Natives	Indigenous Peoples of Alaska	Avoid the term "eskimo," because it can be considered pejorative.
America; American (in reference to the United States; or a person who lives in the United States)	"The United States" (as a noun) or "U.S." (as an adjective) may be preferred, depending on context.	"America" can refer to any country in North, South, or Central America. "United States" is more precise when referring just to that country.
American Indian	When possible, it is preferred to name specific tribal affiliations.	Sources differ about whether American Indian or Native American is more respectful or preferred.
Arab, Arab American	When a person's nationality is known, Lebanese, Syrian, Yemeni, etc., may be more appropriate	Use a specific country when referring to ethnicity/nationality.
Asian	East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc. may	Not considered pejorative, but it is a very broad/umbrella term.

	be more appropriate, when an individual's nationality is known	
BIPOC (Black and Indigenous and People of Color)	N/A	This is a new acronym popularized in 2019 and 2020, and it is relatively untested. We recommend at first use to present the acronym followed by the full name in parentheses.
Black	N/A	Always Capitalize.
Black Lives Matter (BLM)	N/A	Capitalize; no italics or quotation marks should be used.
Caucasian	White/White, European American (if this is accurate)	Originated as a way of classifying white people as a race to be favorably compared with other races.
Chicano/Chicana	N/A	<i>Notes:</i> It might be considered an in-group term by some. It should not be used as a synonym for Mexican American
Eskimo	Inuit (Inuk, sing.), Alaska Native, Indigenous Peoples; specify people or nation when possible	Considered pejorative.
Ethnic cleansing	Genocide	Some regard the term as a dehumanizing euphemism for "genocide." Implies the victims of violence are "dirty" or "diseased."
Exotic (in reference to people)	Specify origin of people, locations, etc.	Should not be used as a way of describing a culture or person of color. When describing women of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage, it often implies a departure from a white norm.
ghetto	Reference specific neighborhoods; section, district, quarter	Used to refer to sections of cities that are poor or are largely populated by people

		of color; generally derogatory.
gyp (v.); gypsy (n.)	Cheat (v.); Romani people (n.)	Derogatory reference to Romani people.
Hawaiian Native	Pacific Islander, Indigenous Peoples of the Hawaiian Islands	Be as specific as possible about origin.

Hispanic	Specify region or nation of origin when possible	Not an all-encompassing term. Describes people who trace their ancestry to a Spanish-speaking country. Might be preferred by people from Latin America. NOT interchangeable with “Latino/Latina /Latinx” (e.g., Native Brazilians, who speak Portuguese as their first language, are not Hispanic).
illegal alien, illegal immigrant	Undocumented migrant (or other more specific reference)	Outdated/Offensive
Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous people	N/A	Always capitalize “Indigenous” whenever it is used. There is not consistent guidance on capitalization of “peoples” (presented as plural) at this time; chose either and be consistent.
Inner city	Specific names of neighborhoods	Has been used as a synonym for neighborhoods inhabited by people of color and has a negative connotation. Code for people of color, crime, and poverty.
Latino, Latina, Latinx	Latino/Latina may be appropriate, depending on context and editorial judgment. It is often also useful to specify an individual's region or nation of origin when possible.	Latinx is used to describe a broad, linguistically diverse, and gender-inclusive population (it is nonbinary). However, the term is not widely accepted (or even recognized by the people it is used to describe—and thus

		not used often as a term with which people self-identify). Not interchangeable with Hispanic
minority, minorities	people of color, underrepresented groups, minoritized groups	Not a synonym for "people of color." May be viewed pejoratively because it is usually equated with being less than, oppressed, or deficient in comparison with the majority. Can also be inaccurate demographically.
mixed, mixing (in reference to race)	multiracial, biracial, multiethnic	Offensive/outdated. "Mixed" is often used in relation to objects or animal breeding and is therefore offensive when applied to a person. Use individuals' preferred racial identity whenever possible.
non-white, nonwhite (also non-White)	People of color; more appropriate to use parallel terms (i.e., Asian American, Mexican American, etc.)	Pejorative because it is compared with the socially dominant group.
Oriental	Asian, Asian American, Canadian Asian; specify region or nation of origin when possible	Outdated, pejorative in reference to people.
slaves	Enslaved people	In all disciplines, avoid term when referencing people because it separates a person's identity from their circumstance. In history, an exception is allowed if the context requires it
Third World	developing nation, underdeveloped country, less-developed country, low- and middle-income country; or name country specifically	Outdated/considered offensive; classist connotation
thug	N/A	Code term, used derogatorily to indicate Black individuals.

tribe (in reference to Indigenous group)	people, nation	Stereotypical connotation; cultural appropriation in some contexts.
underprivileged	economically marginalized, economically exploited; whenever possible, use more specific terms (i.e., underfunded) or refer to discrimination or systematic oppression as a whole	"Underprivileged" means having less money, education, resources, and so forth than the other people in a society and may refer to individuals or subgroups in any racial or ethnic group.
urban	N/A	Outdated generalizing term for Black people /industries. "Urban" should be used only with the general meaning "of or related to a city," not specifically to refer to Black people/Black communities within a city or elsewhere. Term is sometimes used as code.
white/White	European American (in proper context—this is not always accurate)	Socially constructed category that references race and not color. Some authors and editors will wish to capitalize White and others will wish to lowercase. Either is acceptable if handled consistently. "Black" should be capitalized either way.

Gender and Sexuality

Key:

Use

Use with Caution

Avoid

Term / Phrase	Alternatives	Explanation
bisexual	N/A	Use LGBTQ to refer to a broad community or be specific when relevant: lesbian, gay man, bisexual woman, etc.
Cisgender (n.)	Rework construction to allow for use as an adjective: "cisgender person"	Appropriate to use as an adjective; avoid as a noun, which tends to objectify
Gay (adj. when referring to the LGBTQ+ community)	In reference to the community, use "LGBTQ," "LGBTQ+." Use "gay" (adj.) when referring to a person who identifies as gay.	Do not use as an umbrella term for the community.
gay	N/A	Use LGBTQ to refer to a broad community or be specific when relevant: lesbian, gay man, bisexual woman, etc.
homosexual	gay man, lesbian, bisexual man, bisexual woman	Imprecise, overgeneralizing.
intersex individual	intersex person	Use "person" whenever possible over "individual," because the former sounds less clinical.
lesbian	N/A	Use LGBTQ to refer to a broad community or be specific when relevant: lesbian, gay man, bisexual woman, etc.

LGBTQ, LGBTQ+	Variant "LGBTQIA" or "LGBTQIA+" (which includes intersex and asexual people) is also acceptable/respectful and may be preferable, depending on context and editorial judgment.	Use LGBTQ or LGBTQ+ to refer to a broad community or be specific when referring to individuals: lesbian, gay man, bisexual woman, etc.
opposite sex, opposite gender	another sex, another gender	Avoid using binary terms when it comes to both sex and gender.
queer	In reference to the community, use LGBTQ, LGBTQ+. Use gay (adj.) when referring to an individual who identifies as gay.	"Queer" is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or cisgender. The term was originally pejorative, but in the past 30-40 years it has been reclaimed by activists in the LGBTQ+ community. Queer is an acceptable in-group term but be careful about calling an individual queer unless they have self-identified as such.
sexual preference	sexual orientation	Implies choice
they/them (for use to reference nonbinary genders)	Respect people's decisions about which pronouns they use. In this instance, they/them is used to refer to a person whose pronoun you know is "they."	Example: "Kelly is going to the store; they will be back in half an hour."
they/them/their (as singular pronoun)	Depending on context, editors and authors may choose to rewrite sentences to avoid a singular pronoun reference altogether. In this instance, they /them is used to refer to a person whose pronouns are not known—to avoid the binary construction of "he or she"	More inclusive, no assumptions on gender—but not universally endorsed.
transgendered	transgender, trans ("trans" is more informal—and likely not appropriate in tone for	Pejorative term; the "- ed" suffix implies that being trans is something that happens to

	academic publishing-- but it is considered acceptable/respectful).	a person, rather than simply who they are.
transsexual	transgender	Outdated term previously given to the transgender community by the medical establishment.
transvestite	transgender, nonbinary	Outdated, pejorative.

Age and Ability

Key:

Use

Use with Caution

Avoid

Term / Phrase	Alternatives	Explanation
autistic	Person with autism; person on the spectrum of autism	Separate condition from person. Some people may prefer "autistic person", so check on the individual's preference.
crazy	Use terms like ridiculous, unbelievable, etc., when that is the intended meaning	Perpetuates mental health stigma. Often used colloquially, i.e., "That's so crazy!" to mean "I can't believe that!", but this use should be avoided and is increasingly recognized as disrespectful toward people with mental illness.
Deaf (culture, community)	N/A	Use identity-first, capital "D" Deaf when referring to those who identify with Deaf culture.
disadvantaged (n.)	Use more specific terms to refer to education, income bracket, etc.	Used as a noun, it objectifies.
hearing-impaired, person with hearing loss	hard of hearing, deaf person, member of Deaf culture	Deficit language— focusing on a person's inability.
high-functioning, low-functioning	high support needs, low support needs	Use these alternative terms as descriptions and not labels. "Functioning" is no longer used.
elderly (n.)	elderly person	Used as a noun, it objectifies.
insane	Use terms like ridiculous, unbelievable, etc. when that is the intended meaning	Perpetuates mental health stigma. Often used colloquially, i.e., "That's so insane!" to mean "I can't believe that!", but this use

		should be avoided and is increasingly recognized as disrespectful toward people with mental illness.
mentally challenged, mentally retarded, mentally ill (n.)	person with a mental illness, people with intellectual disabilities	Regarded as condescending, pejorative.
person with blindness	blind person, person who is blind	Regarded as condescending. <i>Also:</i> Avoid using "blind" as an adjective to mean things like "ignorant, unquestioning, insensitive" etc.
physically challenged	person with a physical disability; person who has a physical disability; physically disabled person (as is appropriate for the person or community being discussed)	Regarded as condescending.
senior (n.), senior citizen	senior person, senior individual	As a noun, "senior" objectifies. "Senior citizen" is considered by some as condescending.
special needs (in reference to a person with a disability)	person with a disability; individual with a disability	Form of ableism; euphemism that is considered by some as condescending.
wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair	wheelchair user, person in a wheelchair	Uses negativistic term that implies restriction.

Religion

Key:

Use

Use with Caution

Avoid

Term / Phrase	Alternatives	Explanation
A.D., ad	C.E., CE	Still widely used, but may be viewed as inappropriate because it has a religious affiliation ("Anno Domini" meaning "in the year of the lord"; and often interpreted as "after death [of Christ]")
B.C., bc	B.C.E, bce	Inappropriate because it has a religious affiliation ("before Christ").
Black Muslim	member of the Nation of Islam or Black American Muslims, depending on context	"Black Muslim" is a term that became associated with the Nation of Islam but is now considered derogatory and should be avoided. The preferred term is simply member of the Nation of Islam. Also, because of that association, do not use Black Muslim to describe African Americans who practice traditional Islam, whose tenets differ markedly from the Nation's. Instead, say African American Muslims [or, Black American Muslim].
Buddhism, Buddhist	N/A	Be sure to capitalize.
Christianity, Christian, Christendom	N/A	Be sure to capitalize.

church	N/A	Use lowercase when referencing organized Christianity in general; capitalize when part of a formal name.
Confucianism, Confucian	N/A	Be sure to capitalize.
deity	Also: Allah, Jehovah, God, Christ, Yahweh etc.	Capitalize proper names; lowercase pronouns.
Hinduism, Hindu	N/A	Be sure to capitalize.
Islam, Islamic, Muslim	N/A	Be sure to capitalize.
Islamist	N/A	Similar to the adjectival “Islamic,” but sometimes used with the connotation of “religious fundamentalist” and the further connotation of “possible or actual terrorist.”
Judaism, Jewish, Jew	N/A	Be sure to capitalize. Note: Some may consider “Jew” to be an in-group term.
Moslem	Muslim	Outdated term
Shinto, Shintoism, Shintoist	Be sure to capitalize	N/A
Taoism, Taoist, Taoistic	Be sure to capitalize	N/A

Idiomatic

Key:

Use

Use with Caution

Avoid

Term / Phrase	Alternatives	Explanation
blacklist	dirty word list, block list, exclude list, avoid list (in tech)	This idiomatic expression associates negative connotations with “Black” and positive with “White”— and are therefore considered racist.
master (v., n, adj.) U	main, primary, conductor, captain	This phrase has slavery era connotations; this is an evolving term and there is no consensus on appropriate usage yet (except in the context of technology; see term below)
"slave" terminology in technology ("master program /slave program")	secondary, replica, worker, agent, drone	This phrase has slavery era connotations.
whitelist	allow list,	Used sometimes in technology; as with “blacklist,” it associates negative connotations with “Black” and positive with “White”

References

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