

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE June 28, 2021

First, a few general concepts:

Remember that these suggestions are just that. These are not intended as fixed rules or requirements. You may also wish to use the chart as a glossary in the event someone uses a word with which you are not familiar.

Always consider whether the descriptor is relevant. Use adjectives, not nouns, wherever possible.

Capitalize terms when they are intended to denote a social construct.

Do not hyphenate national origins, even if they are used as adjectives. For example, “Irish American,” not “Irish-American.” “Hyphenated American” is considered a slur.

Try to use gender-neutral terms. For example, “Firefighter” rather than “Fireman,” “Husband and Wife” rather than “Man and Wife,” “Ombuds” rather than “Ombudsman,” “Chair” rather than “Chairman,” “Police Officer” rather than “Policeman,” “Flight Attendant” rather than “Stewardess.”

Plural pronouns (they/them/their) are becoming more widely accepted as singular gender-neutral pronouns. Neopronouns such as “ze/zer,” “ve/ver,” or “Xi/xim” or their derivatives are growing in use for and by non-binary and gender fluid individuals. For more, see

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/08style/neopronouns-nonbinary-explainer.html>

Try to avoid analogies to masters and slaves. “Primary” can often replace “master” (As in “Primary Bedroom” or “Primary Database”) and “secondary” or “subordinate” can often replace “slave” (As in “secondary clutch.”)

Preferred Phraseology	Explanation	More Help
African American, Black	“Black” and “African American” are not coextensive. Some people with dark skin do not identify as African. Some may identify as “African,” “Afro Caribbean,” “Afro Latino” or “other.”	“Black People” is preferable to “Blacks” as a plural noun. Do not use obviously offensive descriptors. In addition, “negro” and “colored” are generally not preferred. For more, see https://www.cbsnews.com/news/not-all-black-people-are-african-american-what-is-the-difference/
Ally	A straight or cisgender person who supports members of the LGBTQ community.	

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American Indian	Umbrella term used for persons from any of multiple First Peoples Nations in what is now the United States.	Where possible, use the name of the particular nation; For example, “Ojibwe” or “Apache.”
APIDA, API	Acronym for Asian, Pacific Islander, Desi American or Asian Pacific Islander.	A broad term, appropriate when trying to include a large group of people. Otherwise, try to be more specific.
Asian, Asian American	<p>“Asian” refers to those who are citizens of countries in the Far East, Southeast Asian or the Indian subcontinent.</p> <p>“Asian” may also refer to people of Asian descent generally.</p>	<p>Refer to groups as “Asian People” Not “Asians,” not “Orientals.”</p> <p>Try to be specific—for example, “Japanese” is more respectful than “Asian.”</p> <p>“Desi” refers to those whose cultural and ethnic identity are related to the Indian subcontinent and the diaspora. Although sometimes used by members of the community, it is considered pejorative or offensive by some. See https://scroll.in/global/975071/is-the-term-desi-offensive-some-south-asian-americans-think-so</p>
BIPOC	Acronym for Black, Indigenous and People of Color.	Enables a shift away for “Minority.”
Bisexual	An individual who is attracted to men and women.	See generally GLAAD Media Reference Guide https://www.glaad.org/reference/style
Blocklist	A list of people or items that are excluded or estopped.	Use in lieu of “Blacklist” as either a noun or a verb. See https://insights.dice.com/2020/
Chicano	Those of Mexican ancestry living in the United States.	Chicanos are Hispanic, but not all Hispanics are Chicanos, much as Germans are European, but not all Europeans are German.
Cisgender	Adjective for a person whose gender assigned at birth corresponds to their gender identity.	

Preferred Phraseology	Explanation	More Help
Disability: "Person first" language	<p>A general rule for describing a broad range of physical and mental conditions. For example, use "person with paraplegia," not "a paraplegic."</p> <p>"Paraplegic person" is acceptable but not preferred.</p>	<p>Avoid the terms "handicapped," and "disabled." Avoid disability-related words such as "moronic," "crippled," "retarded," "crazy," "spaz," "nut" etc., as they are considered offensive.</p> <p>Catch-all phrases such as "the blind" or "the disabled" diminish the individuality, equality or dignity of people with disabilities.</p> <p>Be specific about the disability if possible. For example, "Person using a wheelchair" not "Disabled Person."</p> <p>In this context, avoid using "abnormal," "afflicted with," "suffering from," "confined to," "stricken with," "victim of, etc." as they are considered condescending or otherwise offensive.</p> <p>Note: some in the neurodivergent community prefer identity first language, such as "autistic person," because they regard autism as a major signifier of their primary identity.</p> <p>For more, see: National Center on Disability and Journalism Style Guide https://ncdj.org/</p>
Ethics Wall	An information barrier within an organization intended to prevent exchange of information or communication that could lead to conflicts of interest.	<p>The phrase "Chinese Wall" is considered offensive.</p> <p>"Firewall," "screen" (as used in the ABA Rules of Professional Conduct) or "ethics wall" are preferred.</p>
European American, European, or White	Those of European descent living in the United States.	<p>The term "caucasian" originated in scientific racism and should be avoided. https://www.latimes.com/opinion/</p>

Preferred Phraseology	Explanation	More Help
Gay	Men attracted to other men. May also refer to lesbian women.	<p>“Homosexual” and “MSM” (men who have sex with men) are not preferred terms.</p> <p>Most typically used to refer to men, but lesbians, bisexuals and pansexuals sometimes use “gay” in more informal settings.</p>
Gender Non-Conforming, Nonbinary, Enby, Agender, Gender Neutral	Indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary or does not clearly identify as either male or female.	Enby persons generally prefer gender neutral pronouns such as “they,” “ze,” “ve,” or “xi.”
Hispanic, Latin(a/o) & Latinix	<p>“Hispanic” refers to people from Spanish-speaking countries.</p> <p>“Latino,” “Latina,” or Latinix (the gender-neutral term) refers to people of Latin American descent, regardless of background or language.</p>	<p>People who speak Spanish and are from Central or North America are both Hispanic and Latin/o/a/ix.</p> <p>People who speak Portuguese and are from Latin America are Latin/o/a/ix but are not Hispanic.</p> <p>Spanish speakers from outside Central or North America are Hispanic but not Latin/o/a/ix.</p>
Indigenous	A person with long term family origins in a particular place or region.	“Native” is considered a pejorative term.
Intersex	A person born with any of several variations in sex characteristics that are ambiguous or do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies.	<p>Atypical variations may be, but are not necessarily, obvious at birth.</p> <p>“Hermaphrodite” is an obsolete historical term and is considered offensive.</p>

Preferred Phraseology	Explanation	More Help
Legacy Clause	A clause creating an exemption based on previously existing circumstances.	<p>Substitution for “Grandfather Clause”, which has its roots in provisions in some state constitutions designed to disenfranchise Black people by waiving requirements for descendants of men eligible to vote before 1867.</p> <p>See Nancy Riley https://medium.com/@nriley/words-matter-why-we-should-put-an-end-to-grandfathering-8b19efe08b6a NPR Alan Greenblaatt https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch</p>
Lesbian	Women attracted to other women.	“Homosexual” and “WSW” (women who have sex with women) are not preferred terms.
LGBTQ+	Used to represent a diverse range of gender attraction and gender-identities.	Acronym for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or other (sexual identities.)”
Little Person	Person of short stature.	Dwarfism is a medically diagnosable condition, but using “Dwarf” to describe a person is usually considered offensive. “Midget” is considered pejorative.
Native American	Indigenous people from the United States. Some individuals prefer “American Indian.”	“Indian” should be used only to refer to people and things from India. “Native” without additional descriptor is considered pejorative.
Person of Color	Umbrella term for people who are not White.	<p>Use in lieu of “minority.”</p> <p>Do not use the term “colored people.”</p> <p>May be waning in popularity. See https://youtube/vDvWdn2sc8k</p>
Queer	Umbrella term to describe those who do not identify as straight or cisgender.	Formerly considered offensive. More recently reclaimed, but as “Queer” not “A Queer.”
Roma, Romani	People with South Asian ancestry who traditionally have an itinerant way of life.	<p>“Gypsy” is considered pejorative.</p> <p>In modern times, Roma live worldwide, but live principally in Europe.</p>

Preferred Phraseology	Explanation	More Help
Transgender, Trans	A person who has transitioned or is transitioning from living as one gender to another.	A person transitioning is identified, and typically uses, the pronouns of the gender destination. For example, a man transitioning into a woman is a “transgender woman.”
Underserved/Underrepresented, URM	Refers to groups of people from diverse backgrounds.	URM is an acronym for Under-Represented Minority. Do not use the term “minority.” Use more specific terms whenever possible.
Undocumented Person	Refers to a person residing in the United State who is not a US Citizen, permanent resident, does not hold a current visa to reside in the US or has not applied for official residency.	Do not use the terms “Illegal,” “Illegal Immigrant” or “Illegal Alien.” See “illegal” v “Undocumented” https://www.nwirp.org/illegal-vs-undocumented-a-nwirp-board-members-perspective/

Keep in Mind: There is no way to memorize all the “right” terms and be assured of cultural sensitivity forever. Language is a living, breathing thing, and some terms that may have seemed inoffensive at one point may no longer be inoffensive, and vice versa.

For those who may wish to dive a bit deeper on race- and culture-sensitive language generally:

NPR , Gene Demby: *Why we Have So Many Terms for “People of Color”*

<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/11/07/362273449/why-we-have-so-many-terms-for-people-of-color>

Hamilton College: *Writing About Race, Ethnicity, Social Class and Disability*

<https://www.hamilton.edu/academics/centers/writing/writing-resources/language-of-difference-writing-about-race-ethnicity-social-class-and-disability>

University of Washington, Pamela Oliver *Race, Politics, Justice*

<https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/soc/racepoliticsjustice/>

James, Michael and Adam Burgos, "Race", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/race/>

Bectu *Why is Language Important in Disability and Neurodiversity?*

<https://bectu.org.uk/article/why-is-language-important-in-disability>

Hand in Hand *The Importance of People First and Inclusive Language*

<https://www.handinhandqc.org/post/2018/06/01/the-importance-of-people-first-and-inclusive-language>

But see <https://intheloopaboutneurodiversity.wordpress.com/2019/09/04/why-the-autistic-community-prefers-identity-first-language/>

Insead School of Business, Selin Kesebir *The Role of Language in the Gender Gap*

<https://knowledge.insead.edu/leadership-organisations/the-role-of-language-in-the-gender-gap-7661>

Discover Magazine, Cody Cottier *From Mouth to Mind: How Language Governs Our Perceptions of Gender*

<https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/from-mouth-to-mind-how-language-governs-our-perceptions-of-gender>

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