

# Creating Inclusive Environments

## Recommended Practices for Presentations to Sisters in Crime audiences

Sisters in Crime is committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our practices and communications. Since our organization's founding over thirty years ago, Sisters in Crime has advocated for systemic change within the crime writing community, and we strongly believe that an inclusive crime writing community includes and celebrates people from a variety of backgrounds and lived experiences. Please read our [Code of Conduct](#) to understand our commitment and to ensure that your participation is aligned with our organization's stated values.

Below, we have identified a set of important practices for creating diverse, inclusive and equitable learning environments, whether facilitated in-person or online. Our goals are to ensure that our content and instructional methods are (1) clear and accessible to all participants, who may have a variety of learning needs that may impact their ability to process information, and (2) representative of diverse perspectives and which do not unduly privilege or highlight some identities while marginalizing or silencing others. We expect that our presenters strive to keep these practices in mind as they create and deliver content.

## Creating an accessible learning environment

### When creating slides:

- Use easy to read titles and headers (font should be at least 24 pt)
- Ensure that all images have captions and, if being distributed to participants, use alternative text (alt-text)
- Use animation and GIFs sparingly (“appear” is preferred)
- Use standard transitions between slides (do not use special transition features, which may trigger physical responses like dizziness)
- Avoid extraneous clip-art or other images, as this can be unnecessarily confusing to some learners)
- Avoid complicated backgrounds (especially ones that make text difficult to read)

### When presenting in-person:

- Use a microphone, even in small rooms
- Have at least one microphone for your audience members
- Require audience members to use microphone or, if necessary, repeat comment or question
- Explain visuals (and avoid extraneous images that may be confusing)

### When presenting online:

- Face your camera squarely and speak slowly and clearly to facilitate lip-reading
- Make sure you are well-lit and that your face can be easily seen
- Ensure that there are no obstructions between your face and the camera
- Avoid intense or strobing lights
- Allow people to ask questions via “chat” (if using a platform that allows it); ask someone to help you monitor to make sure no one's comment is missed.

### When creating handouts:

- Choose a font and size that is easily read and decipherable
- Use clear headings and page numbers
- Use lots of white space

## Offering inclusive content

- Use a variety of texts, examples, and other materials to demonstrate diverse perspectives and authors
- Include respectful representations of people and activities that draw from a broad range of ethnicities and backgrounds (e.g. racialized representation, disability representation, queer representation, disparate economic representation, representation from different age groups, etc)
- Consider whether your examples and references presume a certain cultural and social background that your participants may not share
- Consider whether your examples unduly privilege or highlight certain groups
- Be mindful when using images or content that depict graphic content (e.g. violence, blood and gore, domestic violence, racialized violence, sexualized imagery, cursing/swearing, etc). Consider the potential impact on your participants. Include sensitivity or content warnings beforehand and give participants time to respond.

## Using inclusive language

- Use respectful and up-to-date terms for representational groups
  - For example, *Black* for African-Americans, *Indigenous* for Native Americans, *People who hold marginalized identities* instead of “minorities,” LGBTQIA2S+ or another acceptably inclusive term, etc.
  - Use pronouns that get beyond the binary of “he/she” and “his/hers. The singular use of *they* and *them* is [widely acknowledged](#) as grammatically correct as well as inclusive.
  - Avoid [ableist terms](#)
- Double-check and replace language based on prejudicial stereotypes about people from groups who hold marginalized identities

## Other key practices to create inclusive and accessible learning environments:

- If using online platform (e.g. zoom) where participants are visible, ask them to include their names and pronouns. Ask them to introduce themselves via chat.
- Start sessions with an outline or overview. Conclude sessions with summary of key take-aways
- Repeat or re-state questions. Allow participants at least ten seconds to reflect before asking for volunteers (many people need time to process what has been asked)
- Give participants opportunities to discuss ideas or share in pairs or small groups.

## Additional resources:

*Please note that some of these articles may include information outside the scope or nature of your presentation.*

[Tips for Making Your Presentation Accessible](#), Bureau of Internet Accessibility (Nov. 2018).

[Inclusive Design for Accessible Presentations](#), Allison Ravenhill (Nov. 2018).

[Inclusive Presentations](#), The Canadian Centre for Gender+Sexual Identity.

[Best Practices for Avoiding Ableist Terminology](#), James Cherney, UNR (Feb. 2020)

[Identity-First vs. Person-First Language](#), People With Disability Australia.