



## Inclusive Language Resource Guide

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## General Guidelines

It is important when using this guide to consider the following:

- In regards to language around identity, it generally falls into two categories: **person-first** language and **identity-first** language. Generally, only note the identity if it is pertinent to the piece you are writing. If it is necessary to list a person's identity, it is best left to the individual that holds the identity to determine which type of language use they prefer.
  - **Person-first language:** Language that refers to the person first and the identity second. For example: "The writer, who has a bipolar disorder" as opposed to "the disabled writer."
  - **Identity-first language:** Language that refers to the person's identity first. For example, "bipolar people". The basic reason behind members of some identity groups' dislike for the application of people-first language to themselves is that they consider their identity to be inseparable parts of who they are.
- Terminology and grammar around identity is constantly changing and is truly dependent on what piece of a person's identity you are referring to and how individuals experience their own identities.
- For additional assistance, questions or clarification, please be sure to contact the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at [diversity@pratt.edu](mailto:diversity@pratt.edu).

## Ability and Disability

- Refer to a disability only when it's relevant to the story being told. If it is unknown whether a person with a disability prefers person-first language, or identity-first language, emphasize the person first and the disability second.
- If it is necessary to refer to an individual's disability, when possible, talk about an individual's specific impairments (i.e., hearing, vision, etc.). Below are several examples around some common phrases, for the full list, refer to the [National Center on Disability and Journalism Style Guide](#).
  - People who cannot walk are "disabled."
  - People who cannot speak are "individuals without speech."
  - Use "person who is blind" or "visually impaired," not "blind person" or "blind student."
  - Use "person who has a learning disability," not "slow learner," "retarded," or "learning disabled."
- Avoid constructions such as "the disabled"; "People with disabilities" is best.
- Buildings that accommodate people with disabilities are "accessible" buildings.
- Use "congenital disability," not "birth defect."
- "Handicap" should refer only to a condition or physical barrier.
- Do not use terms such as "schizophrenic," or "psychotic," except when referring to an official diagnosis.
- People without disabilities should be referred to as "nondisabled," instead of "normal."
- Avoid phrases such as "confined," "bound," "restricted," or "dependent"; choose phrases such as "person who uses a wheelchair" or "person who walks with crutches."

- Avoid using self-diagnosing language such as, “I’m OCD,” and “I’m having an anxiety attack right now,” unless these mental illnesses have been diagnosed.

**Age**

Avoid referring to someone’s age, unless it’s relevant to what you’re writing about (for example when referring to benefits that are available to people of certain ages).

- Age ranges or generational cohorts should be specific, or defined by birth date, for example, “baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964”.
- Do not use sentimentalized language that patronizes, distorts, or ignores people based on their age number.
- Avoid using age-related terminology to describe a situation metaphorically, especially if the phrasing is meant as an insult. For example, don’t use women or older relatives as a substitute for “novice” or “beginner” e.g. “Something is so simple your mother can use it”
- Asked for preferred terminologies, like when it comes to “older person” or “senior” or “elderly”.

**Gender and Sexual Identity**

1) Make content gender-neutral wherever possible.

- Use words that include all genders. Examples include: author, spokesperson, sales representative, business owner, entrepreneur, retailer, actor, master of ceremonies, fellow as an adjective (i.e., fellow alumni), human beings, humanity, people, individuals.
- Avoid words and phrases that indicate gender bias, such as irrelevant descriptions of appearance.
- Do not use “he” as an all-inclusive pronoun.
- We support using “they” or “their” as singular pronouns. (More on this below)
- Avoid “guys” as a way to refer to mixed-gender groups.
- If “he or she” is used, change the subject to the plural so that “they” becomes the appropriate pronoun.
- If possible, revise a sentence to eliminate the pronoun altogether, or repeat the noun or use a synonym for it.
- Avoid words that end in “-man” to a gender-neutral alternative. Examples include:

Instead of:	Use:
best man for the job	best candidate
businessmen	business personnel or business people
chairman	chair, department chair
craftsman	artisan

fireman	firefighter
foreman	supervisor
freshman	first-year student
husband/wife	partner, spouse
mailman	postal worker, letter carrier
mankind	humankind, people, humanity
man-made	synthetic, manufactured, artificial, handmade, machine-made, constructed, or produced
manpower	personnel, employees, staff
mothering, fathering	caring, nurturing, parenting
to man	to run, to operate, to staff

2) Try to use accurate terms when referring to gender and sexual orientation. Below are several commonly-used, out-of-date phrases, and their replacements. For further reference, refer to the [GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#) or the Pratt Institute’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Allies [LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Sheet](#).

Instead of:	Use:
<p><b>"homosexual" (n. or adj.)</b></p> <p>Because of the clinical history of the word “homosexual,” it is aggressively used by anti-LGBTQ extremists to suggest that people attracted to the same sex are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered – notion is discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Please avoid using “homosexual” except in direct quotes. Please also avoid using “homosexual” as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word “gay.” The Associated Press, The New York Times and The Washington Post restrict use of the term “homosexual” (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style).</p>	<p><b>"gay" (adj.); "gay man" or "lesbian" (n.); "gay person/people"; "queer people";</b></p> <p>Please use gay, lesbian, or when appropriate bisexual or queer to describe all people attracted to members of the same or multiple genders.</p>
<p><b>"homosexual relations/relationship," "homosexual couple," "homosexual sex," etc.</b></p> <p>Identifying a same-sex couple as "a homosexual couple," characterizing their relationship as "a homosexual relationship," or identifying their intimacy as "homosexual sex" is extremely offensive and should be avoided. These constructions are</p>	<p><b>"relationship," "couple" (or, if necessary, "gay/lesbian/same-sex couple"), "sex," etc.</b></p> <p>As a rule, try to avoid labeling an activity, emotion, or relationship gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer unless you would call the same activity, emotion, or relationship "straight" if</p>

<p>frequently used by anti-LGBTQ extremists to denigrate LGBTQ people, couples, and relationships.</p>	<p>engaged in by someone of another orientation. In most cases, your readers, viewers, or listeners will be able to discern people's sexes and/or orientations through the names of the parties involved, your depictions of their relationships, and your use of pronouns.</p>
<p><b>"sexual preference"</b></p> <p>The term "sexual preference" in terms to someone's orientation is typically used to suggest that being attracted to the same sex is a choice and therefore can and should be "cured."</p>	<p><b>"sexual orientation" or "orientation"</b></p> <p>Sexual orientation is the accurate description of an individual's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex and is inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and queer people, as well as straight men and women (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style)</p>
<p><b>"gay lifestyle," "homosexual lifestyle," or "transgender lifestyle"</b></p> <p>There is no single LGBTQ lifestyle. LGBTQ people are diverse in the ways they lead their lives. The phrases "gay lifestyle," "homosexual lifestyle," and "transgender lifestyle" are used to denigrate LGBTQ people suggesting that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (see Transgender Glossary of Terms) is a choice and therefore can and should be "cured" (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style).</p>	<p><b>"LGBTQ+ people and their lives"</b></p>
<p><b>"admitted homosexual" or "avowed Homosexual"</b></p> <p>Dated terms used to describe those who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. The words "admitted" or "avowed" suggest that being attracted to the same sex is somehow shameful or inherently secretive.</p>	<p><b>"out gay man," "out lesbian," or "out queer person"</b></p> <p>You may also simply describe the person as being out, for example: "Ricky Martin is an out pop star from Puerto Rico." Avoid the use of the word "homosexual" in any case (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style).</p>
<p><b>"gay agenda" or "homosexual agenda"</b></p> <p>Notions of a so-called "homosexual agenda" are rhetorical inventions of anti-LGBTQ extremists seeking to create a climate of fear by portraying the pursuit of equal opportunity for LGBTQ people as sinister (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style).</p>	<p><b>Accurate descriptions of the issues (e.g., "inclusion in existing nondiscrimination laws," "securing equal employment protections")</b></p> <p>LGBTQ+ people are motivated by the same hopes, concerns, and desires as other everyday Americans. They seek to be able to earn a living, be safe in their communities, serve their country, and take care of the ones they love. Their commitment to equality and acceptance is one they share with many allies and advocates who are not LGBTQ+.</p>

<p><b>"special rights"</b></p> <p>Anti-LGBTQ extremists frequently characterize equal protection of the law for LGBTQ people as "special rights" to incite opposition to such things as relationship recognition and inclusive nondiscrimination laws (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style). As such, the term should be avoided.</p>	<p><b>"equal rights" or "equal protection"</b></p>
<p><b>"transgenders," "a transgender"</b></p> <p>Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, "Tony is a transgender," or "The parade included many transgenders."</p>	<p><b>"transgender people," "a transgender person"</b></p> <p>For example, "Tony is a transgender man," or "The parade included many transgender people."</p>
<p><b>"transgendered"</b></p> <p>The adjective transgender should never have an extraneous "-ed" tacked onto the end. An "-ed" suffix adds unnecessary length to the word and can cause tense confusion and grammatical errors. It also brings transgender into alignment with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer. You would not say that Elton John is "gayed" or Ellen DeGeneres is "lesbianed," therefore you would not say Chaz Bono is "transgendered."</p>	<p><b>"transgender"</b></p>
<p><b>"transgenderism"</b></p> <p>This is not a term commonly used by transgender people. This is a term used by anti-transgender activists to dehumanize transgender people and reduce who they are to "a condition."</p>	<p><b>"being transgender"</b></p> <p>Refer to being transgender instead, or refer to the transgender community. You can also refer to the movement for transgender equality and acceptance.</p>
<p><b>"sex change," "pre-operative," "post-operative"</b></p> <p>Referring to a "sex-change operation," or using terms such as "pre-operative" or "post-operative," inaccurately suggests that a person must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition.</p>	<p><b>"transition"</b></p>
<p><b>"biologically male," "biologically female," "genetically male," "genetically female," "born a man," "born a woman"</b></p> <p>Problematic phrases like those above are reductive and overly-simplify a very complex subject. As mentioned above, a person's sex is determined by a number of factors - not simply genetics - and a person's biology does not "trump" a person's gender identity. Finally, people are born babies: they are not "born a man" or "born a woman."</p>	<p><b>"assigned male at birth," "assigned female at birth" or "designated male at birth," "designated female at birth"</b></p>

<p><b>"passing" and "stealth"</b></p> <p>While some transgender people may use these terms among themselves, it is not appropriate to repeat them in mainstream media unless it's in a direct quote. The terms refer to a transgender person's ability to go through daily life without others making an assumption that they are transgender. However, the terms themselves are problematic because "passing" implies "passing as something you're not," while "stealth" connotes deceit. When transgender people are living as their authentic selves, and are not perceived as transgender by others, that does not make them deceptive or misleading.</p>	<p><b>"visibly transgender," "not visibly transgender"</b></p>
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### 3) Pronouns

Plural pronouns are becoming more widely accepted as gender-neutral singular pronouns. It is permissible and grammatically correct, per MLA and APA guidelines, to rewrite singular pronouns using a form of 'they' if you cannot rephrase your sentence to be plural rather than singular. For example: Each author was chosen based on his or her research. Authors were chosen based on their research. Here is a list of the most common pronouns used. As always, use the pronouns of the individual. You may see more pronouns outside of this list.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronouns	Reflexive	Pronunciation
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself	Pronounced as it looks
He	Him	His	His	Himself	Pronounced as it looks
Ze	Zim	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	Pronounced Zay or Zee/Zim (rhymes with them)/ Zir (rhymes with their)
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves	Pronounced as it looks

### 4) Other notes:

- Use descriptors of gender identity or sexual orientation as modifiers, not as nouns (for example, transgender person, cisgender person, or lesbian woman).

- Never guess sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. When in doubt, either reconsider the need to include this information or ask the person you're referring to how they identify and what pronouns they use.
- Use different sex instead of opposite sex (because this recognizes gender and sex as a spectrum, rather than a binary).
- Don't make assumptions about marital or family relationships (for example, use partner or spouse instead of husband and wife; use parent instead of mother and father).

## Race, Ethnicity, & National Origin

- Here is a list of the most common identities. However, this list is non-exhaustive and we suggest using the term preferred by the group and/or the individual who you are referring to.

Identity	Explanation	Example(s)
African American/Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black and African American are not always interchangeable. Some individuals prefer the term Black because they do not identify as African and/or American.</li> <li>• Individuals may identify as African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino or other.</li> <li>• If referring to a group in general, use Black.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to groups as Black students, Black faculty members, etc., not "Blacks".</li> <li>• Consider the necessity of using race within your text. Ask yourself: "Would I mention 'White student' or 'White faculty member' when discussing others?"</li> </ul>
Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Desi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asian refers to people who are citizens of countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent, or to describe people of Asian descent. Asian Americans trace their origins to these regions.</li> <li>• Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian, Fijian and other peoples of the Pacific Island nations.</li> <li>• Desi refers to individuals whose cultural and ethnic identity are related to the Indian subcontinent and the diaspora.</li> <li>• Use Asian/Pacific Islander when referring to the relevant population in its entirety. Otherwise, use the preferred term of the individual or group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to groups as Asian students, Asian faculty members, etc., not Asians</li> <li>• Consider the necessity of using race within your text. Ask yourself: "Would I mention 'White student' or 'White faculty member' when discussing others?"</li> <li>• Oriental: Do not use to refer to a person or people. Only acceptable in some references to art objects, such as an oriental rug.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to be specific when possible. For example, if you are referring to individuals from Japan, instead of saying “Asian”, use “Japanese”</li> </ul>	
<p>Hispanic, Latin(a/o), &amp; Latinx</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hispanic refers to people who are from or whose ancestors are from Spanish-speaking countries.</li> <li>• Latino, Latina, or Latinx (La-Teen-ex) is a person of Latin American descent who can be of any background or language. If the individual or group does not identify as either Latino or Latina, the gender-neutral term Latinx can be used. When referring to a group, generally use Latinx as it is gender inclusive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People from Mexico, Cuba, and Guatemala who speak Spanish are both Hispanic and Latin(o/a)/Latinx.</li> <li>• Brazilians who speak Portuguese are Latin(o/a)/Latinx but not Hispanic.</li> <li>• Spanish-speaking people in Spain and outside Latin America are Hispanic but not Latin(o/a)/Latinx.</li> </ul>
<p>Native American, Indigenous People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native American is preferred unless the individual or group specifies otherwise.</li> <li>• Occasionally some prefer American Indian; however, this is not universal.</li> <li>• When possible, use specific designation, clan, or tribe name such as Cherokee or Navajo.</li> <li>• The word “Indigenous” comes from the Latin word indigena, which means “sprung from the land; native.” Therefore, using “Indigenous” over “Aboriginal” reinforces land claims and encourages territory acknowledgments, a practice which links Indigenous Peoples to their land and respects their claims over it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The term “Indian” is used only when referring to people from India, not for Native Americans.</li> <li>• “First Nation” is a term used to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit. This term came into common usage in the 1970s and '80s and generally replaced the term “Indian,” although unlike “Indian,” the term “First Nation” does not have a legal definition.</li> <li>• If you are talking about both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it's best to say either 'Indigenous Australians' or 'Indigenous people'. Without a capital "a", "aboriginal" can refer to an Indigenous person from anywhere in the world.</li> </ul>
<p>People of Color</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not use the term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not use the term</li> </ul>

	<p>minority to refer to individuals/students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Instead, use “people of color/students of color”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BIPOC: Stands for “Black, Indigenous and People of Color”. This term is also used in place of “people of color” or “POC” to account for the erasure of Black people with darker skin and Native American people.</li> </ul>	<p>“colored people”</p>
Underserved / Underrepresented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not use the term minority to describe students from diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• When referring to multiple groups of students from diverse backgrounds, use “Underserved/Underrepresented students”; however, use the specific group title when possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For example: LGBTQ+ students, black students, undocumented students, etc.</li> </ul>
National Origins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not hyphenate national origins even if they are used as adjectives. The use of the hyphen is rooted in the history of the “hyphenated American”—an epithet used during the late 19th century to the early 20th century to ridicule Americans of foreign birth or origin.</li> <li>• Additionally, identifiers such as African American, Native American, Asian American, are never hyphenated—even if they are used as adjectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example: Irish American, Polish American, Japanese American</li> </ul>
Immigration Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not use the word “illegal immigrant” or “illegal alien” to refer to individuals who are not U.S. citizens/permanent residents, who do not hold visas to reside in the U.S., or who have not applied for official residency.</li> <li>• These words dehumanize the individual by stripping their identity down to a legal status. Instead of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example: Undocumented students; Undocumented individuals</li> </ul>

	saying “illegal immigrant” or “illegal alien”, use “undocumented”	
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## Religion

- Avoid using words, images, or situations that reinforce religious stereotypes (even stereotypes that may appear to be positive).
- Don’t make assumptions about a person’s religion. A person should not make assumptions about how another individual may or may not practice their religion. Be aware of complexities within religious identities.

### Additional Resources and References:

18F Content Guide:

<https://content-guide.18f.gov/inclusive-language/>

Asian-American Journalist Association Handbook:

<https://www.aaja.org/aajahandbook>

Diversity Style Guide: A guide, a project of the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University, which contains more than 700 terms related to race/ethnicity, disability, immigration, sexuality and gender identity, drugs and alcohol, and geography.

<https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/>

GLAAD Stylebook:

<https://www.glaad.org/sites/default/files/GLAAD-Media-Reference-Guide-Tenth-Edition.pdf>

Marketing Partners for Positive Change (Guide to Inclusive Language):

<https://www.marketing-partners.com/guide-to-inclusive-language#age>

National Center on Disability and Journalism Stylebook:

[Disability Language Style Guide](#)

NLGJA (The Association of LGBTQ Journalists) Stylebook:

[Terminology | Stylebook on LGBTQ issues](#)

Religion Stylebook:

<http://religionstylebook.com/>

University of California Aiken Department of Diversity Initiatives Language Guide:

<https://www.usca.edu/diversity-initiatives/training-resources/guide-to-inclusive-language/inclusive-language-guide/file>