

## Say This, Not That: Inclusive Language Examples

### Gender, Sex and Identity

| <b>Not Inclusive</b>  | <b>More Inclusive</b>  | <b>Here's Why</b>  |
|---|--|--|
| He or She<br>Ladies and Gentleman   | Ask for pronouns<br>They, them, theirs<br>Everyone   | These terms imply that gender is binary (i.e. either man or woman) and do not acknowledge that people may identify anywhere along the gender spectrum and/or their biological sex may not match their gender identity. Inclusive language ensures that all people in a room or at an event are acknowledged. |
| Homosexual  | Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,<br>Pansexual, Queer<br><br>It is important to ask what term a person prefers and to not assign one arbitrarily | Because of the clinical history of the word homosexual, it is used in an offensive way to suggest that gay people are somehow not normal or psychologically/emotionally disordered— notions discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s.     |
| Man the Booth<br><br>Man Kind<br>Manmade<br><br>You Guys<br><br>Policeman/Fireman | Staff the booth<br><br>Humankind<br>Made by hand<br><br>Friends, colleagues, everyone, all<br><br>Police officer/firefighter           | Using man as a generic term excludes women and nonbinary gender identities and overlooks their contributions and roles in society. Inclusive language acknowledges that people with many different identities can fill the role and can contribute,  |
| Male/Female   | Man/Woman<br><br>Inquire about and use the individual's gender identity but only when pertinent to the conversation.                   | Male and female refer to biological sex and not gender. In terms of communication methods (articles, social media, etc.), we rarely need to identify a person's biological sex and are more often referring to gender. In these  |

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|                    |   |  |
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|                    | Remember, there are genders outside the gender binary of man/woman, including but not limited to, agender, gender queer, gender fluid, bigender, and gender variant | cases, using gender identity terms is preferred.   |
| Mr./ Mrs./ Ms.     | First or last name<br>Mx<br>If they are a Dr., use that title   | While generally acceptable, using titles can be problematic when you are not aware of a person's gender identity and try to guess, or when the use of the title is against a person's personal preference. These terms also exclude folks outside of the man/woman binary. When possible, and when it is not a personal preference to use one of these titles, refer to folks by first or last name. Mx is a gender-neutral title that can also be used. |
| Preferred Pronouns | Pronouns<br>What are your pronouns?   | Using the word preferred in front of pronouns suggest that gender identity, especially outside of the binary, is a choice and that the pronouns don't really belong to the person, they are preferring them over their true pronouns.  |
| Straight           | Heterosexual  | When used to describe heterosexuals, the term straight implies that anyone LGBTQ+ is crooked or not normal.  |
| Transgendered      | Transgender   | The word transgender never needs the extraneous -ed at the end of the word. In fact, such a construction is grammatically incorrect. Only verbs can be transformed into participles by adding -ed to the end of the word, and transgender is an adjective. For example, it is incorrect to say   |

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|          |            |  |
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|          |            | “Tony is a transgender,” or “The parade included many transgenders.” Instead, say “Tony is a transgender person,” or “The parade included many transgender people.”                      |
| Freshman | First-Year | Using man as a generic term excludes women and nonbinary gender identities. Inclusive language acknowledges that people with many different identities can fill the role and contribute. |

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### Disability and Invisible Illness

| <b>Not Inclusive</b>  | <b>More Inclusive</b>  | <b>Here's Why</b>  |
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| Birth Defect  | Person with a congenital disability<br>Person with a birth anomaly   | The word defect implies a person is broken or somehow incomplete.  |
| The Blind<br>The Deaf   | Person who is blind or vision impaired<br>Person who is deaf or hearing impaired   | These terms align identity only with the person's condition or impairment.   |
| CP victim<br>Spastic<br>Spaz  | Person with cerebral palsy<br>Person with spastic cerebral palsy   | Using these terms to describe a hyperactive person is offensive, as it implies that people with cerebral palsy are not normal.   |
| Dumb<br>Mute  | Person who cannot speak, has difficulty speaking, uses synthetic speech, is non-vocal or non-verbal  | Dumb and mute were once widely used to describe people who could not speak. It implies that they're incapable of expressing themselves. Deaf-mute was used to refer to people who could neither speak nor hear. However, people living with speech and hearing disabilities are capable of expressing themselves in many other ways. |
| Epileptic   | Person with epilepsy<br>Person with a seizure disorder   | Acknowledge that the person lives with a condition but is not defined by it.   |
| Handicapped<br>Disabled<br>Crippled<br>Suffers from<br>Afflicted with<br>Victim of<br>Invalid<br>Lame<br>Deformed | Person with a disability<br>People with disabilities<br>A person who uses leg braces, etc.<br><br>Accessible parking<br>Parking for people with disabilities | These terms imply that people with disabilities are not capable. Instead, acknowledge the disability but do not use it to define a person.   |

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| Handicap parking   |   |  |
| Normal Person  | No replacement as it is never appropriate to use this phrase to describe a person       | Implies that other people are deviations from the norm.  |
| Paraplegic / Quadriplegic                                | Person with a spinal cord injury,<br>person with paraplegia,<br>person who is paralyzed | Like so many other terms for physical conditions, these terms generalize the population and minimize personhood, which should be acknowledged first.   |
| Wheelchair bound, confined or restricted to a wheelchair | Person who uses a wheelchair<br>Wheelchair user   | These terms acknowledge that the person may use a wheelchair as a tool but is not confined, bound, or restricted to it.  |
| ADHD   | Neurodivergent<br>A person with ADHD  | Saying a person is ADHD minimizes their personhood and makes ADHD the single defining trait of their identity.   |
| Anorexic / Bulimic                                       | A person with an eating disorder  | Referring to a person as anorexic/bulimic minimizes personhood. This description should only be used when medically valid. To note, these are psychological disorders and not physical disorders, although they are sometimes used negatively to describe physicality. |
| Autistic   | Neurodivergent<br>A person with Autism Spectrum Disorder                                | Saying a person is Autistic generalizes the population and minimizes personhood. Use this term only when medically valid and self-identified.  |
| Crazy<br>Nuts<br>Maniac<br>Lunatic                       | Surprising, wild<br>Sad<br>Organized, particular  | Originally referring to mental illness, the terms crazy and nuts referred to people who were often institutionalized   |

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| <p>Insane<br/>Deranged<br/>Psycho<br/>Demented<br/>Depressed<br/>OCD</p>                                |  | <p>against their wills. Using these terms to describe something that is surprising or unexpected minimizes a real mental health condition. Likewise, depressed and OCD are sometimes inappropriately used to describe a mood or someone being organized.</p>                                       |
| <p>Lame<br/>Retarded<br/>Stupid<br/>Slow Learner<br/>Moron<br/>Idiot<br/>Imbecile<br/>Down's person</p> | <p>Person with a mental illness, or<br/>person with a learning disability<br/>Boring or uncool as a replacement<br/>when describing something that is not engaging<br/>Person with Down syndrome</p> | <p>Originally referred to mental illness and used as an insult. Down syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of a third copy of chromosome 21. You should only refer to this condition when the diagnosis has been shared and it is relevant to the conversation.</p> |
| <p>Senile / Demented</p>  | <p>Person with Alzheimer's disease<br/>Person who has dementia</p>   | <p>Demented is slang for dementia, which is often not the intended use of the word, and senile is often used incorrectly to denote dementia.</p>   |

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### Physicality

| <b>Not Inclusive</b>                       | <b>More Inclusive</b>  | <b>Here's Why</b>   |
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| Dwarf<br>Midget                            | Little person  | Dwarfism is a medical or genetic condition that results in a stature less than 4 feet 10 inches, according to Little People of America. When used in a nonmedical sense, this term can be offensive, but many view it as the acceptable term for the condition. The term midget was used in the past to describe an unusually short and proportionate person. It is now widely considered derogatory. |
| Fat<br>Overweight<br>Obese<br>Heavy<br>Big | No replacement, as it is never appropriate to use physical descriptors of size or shape. | Use professional language and relevant descriptors instead such as, "the person approaching in the blue suit".  |
| Skinny<br>Anorexic<br>Skin and bones       | No replacement, as it is never appropriate to use physical descriptors of size or shape. | Use professional language and relevant descriptors instead.   |

## Say This, Not That: Inclusive Language Examples

### Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality

| <b>Not Inclusive</b> | <b>More Inclusive</b>   | <b>Here's Why</b>   |
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| American<br>America  | U.S. citizen<br>Person from the U.S.                                      | The Americas encompass many countries. Yet, when we talk about Americans in the United States, we're usually just referring to people from the United States and not acknowledging other countries.   |
| Eskimo               | Indigenous<br>Refer to a person's specific tribe                          | Comes from "ashkimeq," a Danish word borrowed from Algonquin, which literally means "eaters of raw meat." Other etymological research suggests it could mean "snowshoe netter". The term has historically been used to stereotype and demean indigenous and Inuit people.   |
| Colored              | Person of color<br>Black<br>African<br>African-American<br>Afro-Caribbean | This is a highly offensive racial slur that was often used during segregation to separate people of color, particularly Blacks, from "Whites Only" restaurants, bathrooms, drinking fountains, and seats on public transportation, while designated "Colored" spaces were the least-desirable locations and least-maintained spaces.<br>Person of color can apply to any culturally diverse person.<br>Black is a term that encompasses those who are a part of the African diaspora.<br>Calling someone who is |

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|                            |   |   |
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|                            |   | African or Afro-Caribbean, African-American is incorrect. Black is a more encompassing term but to be specific, where relevant, ask.  |
| Hispanic                   | Latinx, Latina, Latino<br>Use the person's country of origin, such as Cuban | This term is widely used to describe individuals from Spanish-speaking countries. However, it is problematic when people are called Hispanic based on their name or appearance without first checking to see how they identify. Many people with Central and South American Indigenous ancestry (e.g. Mayan, Mexico) reject this term because it implies their ancestors came from Spain instead.                 |
| Illegal immigrant<br>Alien | Native American<br>Indigenous<br>Refer to a person's specific tribe         | The term Indian in the U.S. is associated with Christopher Columbus, who mistook the Caribbean islands for those of the Indian Ocean, which were then known as the Indies. As a result of the error, people indigenous to the Americas were dubbed Indians and the term has stuck. It is sometimes associated with the subjugation and decimation of American Indigenous after Europeans arrived in the Americas. |
| Oriental                   | Person of Asian descent, or use a person's identified race or ethnicity     | The term Oriental is associated with a time when Asians had a subordinate status and were excluded  |

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|       |                 | from the U.S. It is offensive when used to describe people because it is also used to describe objects, such as rugs, and because the Orient is no longer an acceptable term for Asia. |
| Slave | Enslaved people | The term slave dehumanizes individuals. Slavery is a condition, not a description.   |

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### Terms and Phrases to Avoid

| <b>Not Inclusive</b>        | <b>More Inclusive</b>  | <b>Here's Why</b>   |
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| Basket Case                 | Nervous  | This term originally referred to a person, usually a soldier from World War I, who had lost all four limbs. The basket in this sense refers to the basket that the person would need to be carried around in and has negative historic meaning.   |
| Cake Walk<br>Takes the Cake | That was easy  | Slave owners would sometimes hold balls for entertainment, where slaves would perform dances to win a cake. Cakewalks became popular through the racism of 19th-century minstrel shows, which portrayed black people as aspiring to be and dance like white people.   |
| Ghetto<br>Barrio            | Use the official name of the neighborhood you are referring to                                       | These phrases have long histories but eventually came to indicate any socially segregated, non-White, urban neighborhood.   |
| Gyp / Gip                   | Use Romani to refer to a person of Romani descent<br>Use cheat to refer to a person who is dishonest | Most likely evolved as a shortened version of gypsy, more correctly known as the Romani, an ethnic group now mostly in Europe and the American continents. The Romani typically traveled extensively and made their money by selling goods. Business disputes naturally arose, and the masses started thinking of Romani as |

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|                  |  | swindlers. Today, gyp has become synonymous with cheating someone.   |
| Long Time No See | I haven't seen you in a long time.   | Originally used to mock Native Americans or Chinese Pidgin English.  |
| No Can Do        | I can't do it.   | Originally a way to mock Chinese people.   |
| Paddy Wagon      | Police car   | The term Paddy originated in the late 1700s as a shortened form of Patrick and later a pejorative term for any Irish person. Wagon refers to a vehicle. Paddy wagon either stemmed from the large number of Irish police officers or the perception that rowdy, drunken Irish people constantly ended up in the back of police cars. |
| Peanut Gallery   | Crowd<br>Audience  | This phrase usually refers to ill-informed hecklers or critics. In reality, the peanut gallery names a section in theaters, usually the cheapest and worst, where many Black people sat during the era of Vaudeville.  |
| Pow Wow          | Use if referring directly to a Indigenous tribal pow wow Meet or get-together, if referring to any gatherings outside Indigenous culture | This term is appropriate if you are referring to an actual Native American pow wow, which is a traditional and modern sacred gathering or ceremony involving one or more tribes. Applying the term as a verb (i.e. let's pow wow) or using it to describe a business meeting or  |

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|                       |                             |   |
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|                       |                             | social gathering outside the Native American culture is inappropriate.  |
| Rule of Thumb         | Standard<br>General rule    | The rule of thumb has been said to derive from an English law that allowed a man to beat his wife with a stick as long as it was no thicker than his thumb.   |
| Sold Down the River   | Betray                      | During slavery in the U.S., enslaved people who were not compliant were often sold, sending them down the Mississippi River to plantations where conditions were much harsher.  |
| Tribe / Spirit Animal | Friends<br>Network<br>Squad | The term tribe, while used in a variety of contexts, is oftentimes used to describe a group of close-knit friends or colleagues. This term can be seen as an appropriation of Native American culture, especially in the U.S. context. This term is appropriate if you are referring to an actual Native American tribe. Spirit Animal is also an appropriation of culture and therefore inappropriate. |