

Inclusive Language: Ability, Physical, Mental, and Chronological Attributes



Important Things to Know:

- Identity is personal - Every Individual has the right to describe themselves as they wish
- Respect - Not everyone wants to share their Identity
- Ask - what applies to one person doesn't always apply to another
- Be specific - avoid generalizations
- Be thoughtful and intentional
- Avoid labels - Ex: instead of "addict" use "a person with a substance use disorder"
- Use gender neutral language: Instead of "you guys" or "ladies and gentleman" say "you all" or "folks"

Terms to Avoid:

Term:	Why?	Consider instead:
Wheelchair-bound, or confined to a wheelchair	wheelchairs are mobility tools, and people are not stuck in them	Uses a wheelchair
Hearing Impaired	The word impaired can have negative connotations and focuses on what a person can't do.	Hard of Hearing
Biological male, Born female	considered derogatory	assigned male/female at birth, or designated male/female at birth
Preferred name, or preferred pronouns	Like anyone, a transgender person's name and pronouns are what they call themselves, not what they prefer to be called. For the same reason, avoid "real name."	Name or pronouns
Sex-change operation	Many transgender people who have surgery — and not all do — see themselves as affirming their gender, not changing it.	Gender-affirming surgery
Addict, or Addicted	Making the transition from "alcoholic" to "someone who struggles with alcoholism" shows respect for the individual and helps to minimize the stigma of addiction.	Suffers with substance abuse
Able Bodied	This term can imply that all people with disabilities lack "able bodies" or the ability to use their bodies well.	Non-disabled, or does not have a disability
Handicapped	(when talking about bathrooms, parking spaces etc.)	Accessible
Deficient		Area of Challenge, or Difficulty

Some Definitions

- Ableism: Discrimination in favor of people who are non-disabled
- Ageism: Discrimination based on age; either negatively stereotyping older adults or aging or underestimating the abilities of younger people.
- Sanism/Mentalism: A type of discrimination and oppression against a mental trait or condition a person has or is judged to have.
- Person-First Language: Language that puts a person before their diagnosis (e.g., being a person with a disability).
- Identity-First Language: Language that leads with a person's diagnosis as a part of their identity (e.g., being a disabled person).
- Sex - a label that is often assigned at birth based on genitals or chromosomes
- Gender - is a social and legal status and often represents how a person feels on the inside
- Sexual orientation - is an inherent emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people

Capitalization

- Black - Capitalizing Black conveys an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black, including those in the African diaspora and within Africa. The lowercase black refers to the color, not a person.
- Indigenous/Latino/Asian American - Capitalized when referring to original inhabitants of a place.
- brown - Do not capitalize "brown" as in "brown people," as it is a broad and imprecise term
- white - Do not capitalize. White people generally do not share the same history and culture, or the experience of being discriminated against because of skin color.

Immigration Status

Rather than referring to residents who are not citizens with such dehumanizing terms as alien or illegal alien or simply illegal, the word "undocumented" is advised, ideally:

- The person or family is undocumented, not they are an undocumented family.
- Or, the person or family lacks documentation; or lacks a path to citizenship.

Language Proficiency

Describing someone as speaking English as a second language is viewed as inadequate in that people may speak more than two languages. Emerging bilingual is equally limiting, and English language learner is paternalistic.

Preferred: She speaks English in addition to other languages, or she speaks Spanish and is learning English, or Spanish or Japanese or Russian, etc. is her first language

Visit <https://www.ohsu.edu/inclusive-language-guide> for the entire Inclusive Language Guide

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