



Belonging | Diversity | Equity | Inclusion Inclusive Language Guide

Introduction:

The Belonging, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (BDEI) Inclusive Language Guide is a resource that can help everyone navigate sensitive language and stay current with the changing cultural vernacular as you communicate with colleagues and our patients and families.

At CHOC, we aspire to create an environment where we practice empathy for one another's varied and unique backgrounds and life experiences, and where we take personal responsibility for one another's sense of belonging; this is an environment that will best enable everyone—patients, families, associates and physicians — to flourish.

Language is a key element of that effort. What we say and how we say it matters – and that has never been truer than now, as we serve and work among a diverse group of children, families and colleagues.

The guidance throughout this document is derived largely from the [Diversity Style Guide](#), a resource for writers and journalists seeking precision and sensitivity. A project of the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University, the guide merges definitions and information from more than two dozen style guides, journalism organizations and other resources.

These recommendations address race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disabilities and more, recognizing that each individual has their own agency and identity. The onus is then on us to work closely with others to ensure their humanity is acknowledged and honored.

This guide is meant to be a living document that should be updated and expanded as needed.

Table of Contents

CHOC definitions of BDEI	4
Ability	4
Conditions	6
General patient, family and staff phrasing guidelines	8
Immigration	9
Language/dialect	10
Mental health	11
Miscellaneous	12
Naming conventions	13
Race/ethnicity/nationality	14
Religion	20
Sex and gender	27
Sexuality	33
Problematic words and phrases	36

CHOC definitions of BDEI

belonging

Feeling that your authentic self (various identities) is welcomed, appreciated and celebrated so you can thrive.

diversity

The presence of people who, as a group, have a wide range of characteristics, seen and unseen, with which they were born or have acquired. These characteristics may include their gender identity, race or ethnicity, military or veteran status, LGBTQ+ status, disability status, and more.

equity

You are given what you need to ensure we all have the same opportunities to grow, thrive and do our best work.

inclusion

Your unique perspective is embraced, respected and valued in conversation, problem-solving and planning.

Alphabetical by topic

Ability

able-bodied

Avoid using this term, and instead use “non-disabled” or “does not have a disability.” Saying “able-bodied” can imply that all people with disabilities lack “able bodies” or the ability to use their body well.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/able-bodied/>

abnormal/abnormality

Use of abnormal/abnormality is appropriate in a medical context, such as to describe a test result or a spine curvature. However, describing a person as abnormal in other instances is derogatory and should be avoided.

Avoid describing behavior as abnormal, as this interpretation reflects social-cultural standards. Use *atypical* instead.

Avoid referring to someone without disabilities as “normal,” as it implies people with disabilities are deviant or strange. “Typical” is better.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/abnormalabnormality/>

accessibility, accessible

The opportunity for people with disabilities to access programs, goods, services and facilities. The extent to which a facility is usable and approachable for people with

disabilities. For example, “Accessible parking is located on the first floor of the visitor parking structure.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/accessibility/>

afflicted with/stricken with/suffers from/victim of

Avoid these terms as they imply a person with a disability or illness is suffering or has a reduced quality of life. This is not always so. Use neutral, fact-based language (e.g., “He has muscular dystrophy.”).

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/afflicted-withstricken-withsuffers-fromvictim-of/>

defect, birth defect

Avoid using these terms when describing a disability. Many people find these terms offensive, as they imply a person is deficient or inferior. Instead, state the nature of the injury or disability. For example, specify “Joseph was born with Down syndrome” or “Joseph has Down syndrome.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/defect-birth-defect/>

Disability, disabled

In general, terms “disabilities” and “disabled” are acceptable, but when possible ask how the person would like to be described. For example, you might specify “Susan has paraplegia.” Whereas other sources recommend “identity-first” language for disability. Identity-first language promotes use of phrases like “amputee,” “diabetic,” and disabled person where disability identity comes first. You can ask the person what they would prefer. Do not use euphemisms like “handi-capable,” “differently abled” or “physically challenged.”

Source: <https://www.apa.org/pi/disability/resources/choosing-words;>
https://www.apstylebook.com/ap_stylebook/disabilities

handicapped

Do not describe a person as handicapped. Instead, when relevant, refer to the person’s specific disability. Though these terms are widely used when citing laws, regulations, places or things, the preferred term is “accessible” – such as “accessible parking.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/handicapped/>

lame

Do not use lame to describe a person with a disability.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/lame/>

non-disabled

Non-disabled has come into usage as a way to refer to someone who does not have a disability. “Non-disabled” or “does not have a disability” are acceptable terms when referring to people who do not identify as having a disability. Do not use “able-bodied.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/non-disabled/>

special/special needs/functional needs

It is more accurate to cite the specific disability, but when a term is required, “functional needs” is preferred. The word “special” in relationship to those with disabilities is widely considered offensive because it euphemistically stigmatizes that which is different. Do not use these terms when describing a person with a disability or the programs designed to serve them, with the exception of government references or formal names of organizations and programs.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/specialspecial-needsfunctional-needs/>

wheelchair/wheelchair-bound/confined to a wheelchair

It is acceptable to describe a person as “someone who uses a wheelchair,” followed by an explanation of why the equipment is required. Avoid “confined to a wheelchair” or “wheelchair-bound,” as these terms describe a person only in relationship to a piece of equipment. The terms also are misleading, as wheelchairs can liberate people, allowing them to move about; they are also inaccurate, as people who use wheelchairs are not permanently confined in them, but are transferred (or transfer themselves) to sleep, sit in chairs, drive cars, etc.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/wheelchairwheelchair-boundconfined-to-a-wheelchair/>

Conditions

abnormal/abnormality

Use of abnormal/abnormality is appropriate in a medical context, such as to describe a test result or a spine curvature. However, describing a person as abnormal is derogatory and should be avoided.

Be cautious when describing behavior as abnormal, as this interpretation reflects social-cultural standards. Use “atypical” instead.

Avoid referring to someone without disabilities as “normal,” as it implies people with disabilities are deviant or strange. “Typical” is better.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/abnormalabnormality/>

afflicted with/stricken with/suffers from/victim of

Avoid these terms as they imply a person with a disability or illness is suffering or has a reduced quality of life. This is not always so. Use neutral, fact-based language (e.g., “He has muscular dystrophy.”).

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/afflicted-withstricken-withsuffers-fromvictim-of/>

amputation/amputee

Amputation refers to the removal of a bodily extremity, while amputee is an acceptable term for someone who has undergone an amputation. Using “someone with an amputation” or “amputee” are both acceptable.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/amputation-amputee/>

cochlear implant

An electronic device that can help a person who is deaf or hard of hearing. When referring to a cochlear implant, avoid describing it as a corrective device or one that would restore a deaf person to mainstream society. Instead define it as an electronic device that can assist a person who is deaf or hard of hearing in understanding speech.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/cochlear-implant/>

Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing

Deaf should be used as an adjective, not as a noun; it describes a person with profound or complete hearing loss. It is best to ask the person whether they use “deaf” or “hard of hearing,” as well as their proper capitalization. Lowercase “deaf” when referring to a hearing-loss condition or to a deaf person who personally uses lowercase. Capitalize the word for those who identify as members of the Deaf community or when they capitalize Deaf when describing themselves. Other acceptable phrases include “the girl who is deaf” or “the boy who is hard of hearing.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/deaf-deaf/>

defect, birth defect

Avoid using these terms when describing a disability. Many people find these terms offensive, as they imply a person is deficient or inferior. Instead, state the nature of the injury or disability. For example, specify “Joseph was born with Down syndrome” or “Joseph has Down syndrome.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/defect-birth-defect/>

dwarf, little person, midget, short stature

Use the descriptors “short stature,” “little person” or “someone with dwarfism.” It is always best to ask the person which term they use to describe themselves. Dwarfism is a medical or genetic condition that results in a stature below 4 feet 10 inches. When used in a non-medical context, however, it can be considered offensive. Do not use terms like “vertically challenged” or “midget.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/dwarf-little-person-midget-short-stature/>, <https://www.lpaonline.org/faq-#Midget>

hard of hearing

This term may be used to refer to people who have a mild to moderate hearing loss that may or may not be corrected with amplification. Those who are hard of hearing usually use speech to communicate. Ask the person whether they identify as “deaf,” “Deaf” or “hard of hearing.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/hard-of-hearing/>

blind/limited vision/low vision/partially sighted/visually impaired

The term legally blind denotes a person with 20/200 visual acuity or less. Therefore, “blind” or “legally blind” is acceptable for people with almost complete vision loss. Many people with vision loss are not considered blind. So, unless the person refers to themselves as legally blind, the terms “low vision,” “limited vision” or “visually impaired” should be used.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/blindlimited-visionlow-visionpartially-sightedvisually-impaired/>

neuroatypical/neurodiverse

Terms used to describe people of atypical developmental, intellectual and cognitive abilities. In other words, they are used to refer to people who have autism or another developmental difference.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/neuroatypical-neurodiverse/>

neurodiversity

Concept that neurological differences like autism are the result of normal, natural variations in the human brain. Initially coined in an academic paper about autism spectrum disorder, the term is now sometimes used to include people with other neurological differences, including dyslexia, Tourette Syndrome and dysgraphia. The term neurodiversity recognizes that people with neurological differences often have strengths and abilities because they see the world in a different way.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/neurodiversity/>

Neurotypical, neurologically typical (NT)

Terms used to describe people with typical developmental, intellectual and cognitive abilities.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/neurotypical-neurologically-typical/>

General patient, family and staff phrasing guidelines

gender-neutral pronouns

Some people don't feel that traditional gender pronouns, such as she/her and he/him, reflect their gender identities. Transgender, genderqueer and other people who step outside the male-female gender paradigm often adopt new pronouns for themselves. It's best to ask which pronouns a person they use. Ask if they use these pronouns in the presence of their caregiver and if they would like their chosen pronouns to be documented in their medical record or intentionally omitted.

When referencing someone whose gender isn't known or in a general sense (e.g., a generalized patient in a pamphlet), use “they” rather than “he,” “she” or “he or she.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-neutral-pronouns/>

identity-first language

Identity-first language emphasizes that an illness or disability plays a role in who a person is and reinforces disability as a positive cultural identifier. Identity-first language is generally preferred by self-advocates in the autistic, deaf and blind communities. It is important to note that whether a person with a disability prefers people-first or identity-first language is not universal.

Source: <https://www.aucd.org/template/page.cfm?id=605>

Medical staff

This is the proper term to refer to CHOC's healthcare members collectively. The term is inclusive of physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists, physician assistants, dentists, dental assistants, physical therapists, occupational therapists, podiatrists, genetic counselors, pathology assistants, registered nurse first assistants, perfusionists, speech pathologists, and audiologists, as defined in CHOC's medical staff bylaws.

Source: <http://paws/index.php/message-from-medical-staff-office/>

parent

In general, though not always, this is the proper term – along with mother and father – for a person raising a child or children. Remember that at CHOC, not every adult responsible for a child is necessarily the parent and instead may be a legal guardian or caregiver. It is always best to ask the person how they identify. Take care not to generalize.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/parent/>

patient

When possible, and when you have consent to do so, try to avoid labeling children, teens and young adults cared for at CHOC as patients and instead refer to them by name or “the child,” “the teenager,” etc. when a name is not mentioned. Using the term patient can cause them to feel objectified rather than seen as people.

people-first language

This refers to a language construction that avoids defining a person in term of their illness or disability. In many cases, this entails placing the reference to the disability or illness after the reference to the person. For example, “a patient with cancer” vs. “a cancer patient.” This construction helps ensure that a person is not represented wholly as their disability or illness. For example, a patient's cancer diagnosis is just one element of their personhood. While we should make every effort to utilize people-first language, deviations from people-first language are allowed in cases when the only alternative is awkward sentence structure and when a person identifies with a specific construction. For example, some members of the Deaf community see being a “Deaf person” as a form of identity and pride. Also, many people with autism prefer to be referred to as “autistic.” Ask a person how they identify.

Source: CDC, *National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities*, *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association*

Immigration

alien

Using this word to describe a foreign-born person who is not a U.S. citizen by naturalization or parentage is pejorative. Instead use “immigrant.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/alien/>

illegal alien, illegal immigrant, illegal, illegals

Avoid these terms, as well as “alien.” These terms do not give an accurate description of a person’s conditional U.S. status, but rather demean an individual by describing them as an alien. Additionally, use caution when disclosing someone’s status due to deportation risk. Alternative terms are “undocumented worker” or “undocumented immigrant.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/illegal-alien/>

undocumented immigrant, worker

Preferred term to “illegal alien,” “illegal immigrant” or “illegal(s).” This term describes the immigration status of people who do not have the federal documentation to show they are legally able to work, visit or live in the United States. This term more accurately describes people who are in the United States without legal paperwork because the word points out that they are undocumented but does not dehumanize them in the manner that such terms as aliens and illegals do.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/undocumented-immigrant/>

Language/dialect

Arabic

Arabic is the name of the language spoken in Arab countries; it is generally not used as an adjective.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/arab/>

Cantonese

Not spoken by all Chinese people, it is a dialect mainly spoken in the environs of Canton, now known as Guangzhou, near the South China Sea. It is also the dialect of many early Chinese immigrants to the United States in the 1840s to 1870s. It is also the principal dialect of Hong Kong. It is still widely spoken in U.S. Chinatowns.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/cantonese/>

Mandarin

This is the official language of China and Taiwan. It is derived from different dialects but is not itself a dialect, or regional variety of a language, like Cockney English. The term Mandarin refers to the spoken language. One speaks Mandarin but writes Chinese.

While the Cantonese dialect is more prevalent in older American Chinatowns, Mandarin

is increasingly spoken in newer Chinatowns. China has one written language using characters understood by anyone who is literate, but many spoken regional dialects such as Shanghainese and Fukienese, which are unintelligible to people from other regions.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/mandarin/>

Tagalog

Pronounced tah-GAH-log. It is the official language of the Philippines, but also one of scores of local and regional dialects.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/tagalog/>

Mental Health

addict, addiction

Addiction is a neurobiological disease, and its development is influenced by environmental, cognitive and genetic factors. Avoid words like addict or junkie; instead use “someone experiencing a drug/alcohol problem.” The term “addiction” is acceptable for uncontrollable, compulsive use of substances as well as acts such as gambling, working, etc., in the face of negative health and social consequences. It is preferable to refer to someone who harmfully uses drugs as “someone with a drug addiction.” Use the term “misuse” in place of abuse when describing harmful drug use, and state that the person “tests positive for (drug)” instead of using the terms “clean” and “dirty” which equate symptoms of illness to filth. Use “recovering” or “in recovery from” to refer to someone trying to overcome active drug addiction.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/addict-addiction/>

Asperger’s syndrome

Asperger’s syndrome was once a distinct diagnosis but is now part of a broader condition known as autism spectrum disorder. Symptoms may include difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, obsession with specific topics, and an inability to understand emotional and nonliteral issues. Refer to someone as having Asperger’s syndrome only if it is relevant or it is used clinically. If in doubt, use people-first language, referring to someone as a person “diagnosed” or “with Asperger’s syndrome.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/aspergers-syndrome/>

autism/autism spectrum disorder

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, common symptoms of autism spectrum disorder include difficulties in communication, impaired social interaction and restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities; however, symptoms vary across the spectrum. Some people with autism prefer being referred to as an autistic person; others object to using autistic as an adjective. Refer to someone as having autism spectrum disorder only if it is relevant or it is used clinically. Ask individuals how they prefer to be described. If in doubt, use people-first language, referring to someone as a person with autism/autism spectrum disorder.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/autismautism-spectrum-disorders/>

crazy/crazed, psycho, nuts, lunatic, deranged, wacko, insane, insanity

This is derogatory language that contributes to negative attitudes about mental illness and to a stigma around mental health treatment and conversation. For instance, rather than writing crazy or deranged, use “people living with a mental illness.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/crazycrazed-psycho-nuts-lunatic-deranged-wacko/>

diagnosis, mental health

When a patient’s diagnosis is confirmed and relevant, specify the condition rather than referring to general “mental illness.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/diagnosis-mental-health/>

psychotic/psycho

A broad term used to describe symptoms of certain mental health problems. Symptoms may include delusions or hallucinations or other loss of contact with reality. People with psychosis are described as psychotic. In common usage, “psychotic” often is used in the same way as the word “crazy,” and thus can be offensive and inaccurate. Use the words “psychotic” and “psychosis” only when they accurately describe a medical experience. Do not use “psychotic” to describe a person; instead refer to a person as having a psychotic condition or psychosis.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/psychoticpsycho/>

schizophrenia, schizophrenic, schizo, schizoid

Schizophrenia is a severe and chronic mental illness characterized by distorted recognition and interpretations of reality, affecting how a person thinks, feels and acts, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Avoid using “schizophrenic” as an adjective, but rather refer to a person as “diagnosed with schizophrenia” or “living with schizophrenia.” Do not use the term for nonpsychiatric conditions, such as a rapidly changing situation or an indecisive person. Similar guidelines apply to words like “psychotic,” “bipolar,” “anorexic” and “OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder).”

Do not use the word “schizophrenic” or others of its ilk colloquially as a synonym for something inconsistent or contradictory.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/schizophrenic/>

suicide

Exercise extreme caution when writing about suicide. The words “committed,” “succeeded” or “failed” are inaccurate. Appropriate wording is that someone died by suicide. Avoid exact details on locations and methods. Do not oversimplify: Suicide is complex and often has many factors. It is almost certainly inaccurate to cite a single cause as, for example, a break-up with a significant other. Suicides usually result when a confluence of events and circumstances makes life temporarily unbearable. Mental health disorders and/or substance abuse are associated with 90 percent of suicides.

Often, even family and friends do not recognize the warning signs or the underlying mental health problems leading to a suicide.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/suicide/>

Miscellaneous

adoption

In writing, this should only be mentioned if the fact that a person was adopted is highly relevant. When used, it should appear in past tense (e.g., She was adopted in 1997 v. She is adopted). Do not refer to someone as “abandoned” or “given up.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/adoption/>

donor-conceived

If an individual was conceived via sperm or egg donor, ask, “What language do you use when referring to the donor?” Use whatever language they use. Do not refer to the donor as the “biological father” or “biological mother” unless the individual/family does so first; these terms have social and legal significance. Genetic history can be discussed using terms such as “family history is significant for X on the donor’s side.” It is acceptable to ask if the family has information about the donor’s medical history.

Source: [Glossary Donor Conception Network \(dcnetwork.org\)](https://www.dcnetwork.org)

homeless

In keeping with people-first language, “a person experiencing homelessness” or “people experiencing homelessness” is the preferred term for someone without a fixed residence. Do not use the dehumanizing collective noun “the homeless.” Other phrases are “people without housing,” “people without homes,” “people experiencing housing insecurity,” or “someone who is unhoused.”

Source: <https://www.unhoused.org/overview>

Safe neighborhood, bad neighborhood

Avoid judgmental terms about neighborhoods or districts. Instead use more specific terms such as low-income neighborhoods or areas with high crime rates.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/safe-neighborhood-bad-neighborhood/>

Naming conventions

Asian, Asian American, Asian names

Asian is a broad term, so exercise caution with use.

“Asian American” (without a hyphen) is the preferred term for a U.S. resident who can trace their lineage to the continent of Asia.

Clarify with the person their family and surname, as well as use of second reference.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/asian/>

Cambodian names

Typically, family names are listed first (e.g., “Smith”) and personal names second (e.g., “John”). Middle names are rare.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/cambodian-names/>

Chinese names

Typically, family names are listed first (as in “Smith”) and personal names second (as in “John”). Many Chinese Americans, however, change the word order to conform to Western practices. They also often adopt Western names in addition to traditional names. Personal names consisting of two words (one word is typically a generational name) are sometimes hyphenated. Check to see if the person uses a hyphen. Rules for married women adopting their husbands’ names are often elaborate. (Taiwan, consisting mainly of ethnic Chinese from the mainland, follows Chinese naming rules.)

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/chinese-names/>

Japanese names

In the United States, Western word order is commonly used for Japanese names. However, in Japan, it is typically family name first, personal name second. Ask the person about their personal usage.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/japanese-names/>

Korean names

Korean names are typically listed as family name first, followed by a two-part personal name. Many Korean Americans, however, have adopted Western name order. Rules differ for men and women. Ask the person about their personal usage.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/korean-names/>

South Asian names (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka)

Names currently used in South Asia and the South Asian Diaspora follow dozens of rules and vary by community. Ask a person which name is the first name and which is the surname.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/south-asian-names-india-pakistan-nepal-sri-lanka-bangladesh-and-others/>

Vietnamese names

Vietnamese names are typically written family name first, personal name last. On second reference, the personal name is sometimes used. But in the United States, Western word order is common. Ask the person their usage.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/vietnamese-names/>

Race/ethnicity/nationality

Note: A person's race and/or ethnicity should not be mentioned in storytelling materials unless relevant. This also applies to references to sexual orientation and religion. These are generally relevant in a medical context, however, to provide a full picture of a person's identity.

abaya

A robe-like garment worn by some women who are Muslims. It is often black and may be a caftan or fabric draped over the shoulders or head. It is sometimes worn with a hijab and/or a niqab.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/abaya/>

African American, Black

When race is relevant to include, it is best to ask the patient, family, associate or physician if they identify as Black or African American, as these terms are not necessarily interchangeable. African American is an ethnic identifier, whereas Black is a racial category.

In cases without a stated identifier or when speaking generally, use “Black” (capitalized). Take efforts to use “Black” as an adjective, not a noun. When describing a group, use “Black people,” not “Blacks.” For example, “The NAACP works to accelerate change in many areas that impact Black people” v. “The NAACP works to accelerate change in many areas that impact Blacks.”

Sources: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/african-american-african-american-black-2/>

Alaska Native

This is an umbrella term that includes Inupait and Yupik, Alaskan Indians (Athabaskan, Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian) and Aleut. They are culturally distinct, and most identify as Alaska Native instead of being grouped as American Indian. Additionally, there is a growing preference for such populations to be referenced by the categorization used in their native language (e.g., Inuit rather than Eskimo). The term “Eskimo” is now considered unacceptably by many or even most Alaska Natives.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/alaska-native/>;
https://www.uaf.edu/anlc/resources/inuit_or_eskimo.php

all-American

Exercise caution that its use is not intended as a synonym for White.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/all-american/>

ally, accomplice

An ally is anyone from a dominant or majority group who works toward ending oppression by supporting and advocating for those in marginalized and oppressed groups.

An accomplice is an ally who uses their power and privilege to challenge the status quo, often risking their physical and social well-being. All accomplices are allies, but not all

allies are accomplices. While an ally is willing to stand in support of a marginalized voice, risk is rarely involved.

Source: <https://pitt.libguides.com/antiracism/ally>

America

This term refers to the entire Western hemisphere and does not apply solely to the United States. North America and South America together are often referred to as the Americas. When referring to the United States of America, use United States or U.S.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/america/>

American Indian

American Indian and Native American are both generally acceptable and can be used interchangeably, although individuals may have a preference. If possible, refer to people by their preferred tribal affiliation.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/american-indian/>

Arab, Arab American, Arabian, Arabic

The term “Arab” refers to nations or people from an Arabic-speaking country. It can be a noun for a person, and it can be used as an adjective. It is not synonymous with Muslim. When referring to events in a specific country, name the country, rather than generalizing Arab. Note: Iran is not an Arab country. The majority of Iranian people are Persian, and the language is Farsi.

“Arab American” is the preferred term for a U.S. resident who traces their ancestry to or immigrated from Arabic-speaking places in the Middle East (southwestern Asia and northern Africa). Not all people who live in this region are Arabs.

“Arabian” is an adjective that refers to Saudi Arabia, the Arabian Peninsula, or for things, such as an Arabian horse. When ethnicity or nationality is relevant, it is more precise and accurate to specify the country by using Lebanese, Yemeni or whatever is appropriate.

“Arabic” is the name of the language spoken in Arab countries; it is generally not used as an adjective.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/arab/>

Asian, Asian American

“Asian” is a broad term, so exercise caution with use.

“Asian American” (without a hyphen) is the preferred term for a U.S. resident who can trace their lineage to the continent of Asia.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/asian/>

biracial

This describes a person who is a combination of two races. Be cautious, as not all biracial individuals self-identify in this manner. Although “mixed race” is suggested as an

alternative, use the term only when a person self-identifies. Do not use “mixed” as an alternative.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/biracial/>

BIPOC

An acronym that stands for “Black, Indigenous and people of color.” It is not interchangeable with “POC,” which stands for people of color. It is best to ask people how they would like to be described with an attention to specificity rather than an acronym.

Source: <https://www.thebipocproject.org/about-us>

burqa

A form of covering for some women who are Muslim. It is an all-enveloping outer garment with a net-covered opening for the eyes or face to allow the woman to see.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/burqa/>

Central America

Central America is bordered by Mexico to the north, Colombia to the southeast, the Caribbean Sea to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the West. Central America consists of seven countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/central-america/>

Chicano/Chicana/Chicanx/Xicano/Xicana/Xicanx

A term that Mexican Americans in the U.S. Southwest sometimes use to describe their heritage. Use only if it is how a person identifies. The terms were originally considered derogatory, but the Chicano movement during the 1960s adopted these names in response to discrimination against Mexican Americans working under unfair labor and social conditions. “Chicanx” is a gender-neutral construction. Note the “X” instead of “Ch” in “Xicano,” “Xicana,” “Xicanx” is used by some to more closely match the original Nahuatl pronunciation.

Sources: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/chicana-chicano/> and *AP Stylebook*

ethnicity, mention of

A person’s ethnicity should not be mentioned unless relevant or in clinical documentation. This also applies to references to race, sexual orientation and religion.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/ethnicity-mention-of/>

Filipino/Pilipino/Filipina/Pilipina/Filipinx/Pilipinx/Pinoy/Pinay/Pinxy

Terms that refer to an inhabitant of the Philippines. Filipino American refers to those who are U.S. residents. Some Filipino Americans, often younger, use “Pilipino” because Tagalog, the leading dialect of the Philippines, lacks an “F” sound. Though “Filipino/Pilipino” is grammatically correct when referring to all genders, note that females may use “Filipina/Pilipina/Pinay.” “Filipinx” and “Pilipinx” are gender-neutral constructions.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/filipinopilipino/>

hijab

Generally used to describe the scarf many women who are Muslim use to cover their head, but it can also refer to the modest dress, in general, that women wear because of the Quran's instruction on modesty. Shiites are more likely to wear hijabs than Sunni Muslims, but women decide whether to wear one based on the dictates of their mosque, community and conscience.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/?glossary=hijab>

Hispanic

This is an umbrella term referring to a person from — or whose ancestors were from — a Spanish-speaking land or culture.

Follow the person's usage and be specific when possible (e.g., Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican American). When personal usage is unknown, use "Latinx," a gender-neutral word to that aligns with the practices and sensibilities of many residents of Southern California.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/hispanic/> and AP

Latina/Latino/Latinx/Latine

"Latinx" (pronounced "La-teen-ex" and the plural "Latinxs") and "Latine" (pronounced "La-teen") are gender-neutral words to refer to people of Latin American cultural or ethnic identity. This could include people who identify as agender, nonbinary, gender diverse, gender expansive, genderqueer and gender fluid. Ask the person how they identify (e.g., "Latinx," "Latino," "Latina," "Chicano," "Chicana," "Hispanic"), but default to Latinx or Latinxs when personal identification is unknown or when speaking generally.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/latinalatino/>;

<https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/latinx/>;

<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2020/09/29/hispanic-heritage-month-terms-bind-us>

Middle Eastern or North African (MENA)

There is no standard definition, the Middle Eastern racialized group is transcontinental and includes people with ancestry from countries or territories such as Jordan and Palestine; and North African includes people with ancestry from countries such as Algeria, Egypt, and Libya. MENA is an abbreviation for the region known as the Middle East and North Africa. Use Middle Eastern or North African descent on first reference. If you use the MENA abbreviation, explain it.

Source: <https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.pdf>; <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/mena-middle-eastern-or-north-african/>

Native American

American Indian and Native American are both generally acceptable and can be used interchangeably, although individuals may identify with one over the other. If possible, refer to people by their tribal affiliation.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/native-american-native/>

niqab

A veil worn by some women who are Muslim; it covers all of their face except the eyes.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/?glossary=niqab/>

Pacific Islander

This U.S. Census term refers to one of eight groups — Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Northern Mariana Islander, Palauan, Samoan, Tahitian and Tongan.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/pacific-islander/>

people of color

The terms “people of color” and “racial minority/minorities” are generally acceptable terms to describe people of races other than White in the United States. Do not use “POC.” When talking about just one group, be specific. Be mindful that some Native Americans say the terms “people of color” and “racial minority” fall short by not encompassing them – hence emerging terms like “BIPOC” (or Black and/or Indigenous and/or people of color) or “IBPOC” (Indigenous and/or Black and/or people of color). Do not refer to an individual as “a minority.”

Source: *The Associated Press*

race

Consider carefully when deciding whether to identify people by race in storytelling materials. Often, it is an irrelevant factor, and drawing unnecessary attention to someone’s race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion can be interpreted as bigotry. This is relevant in a medical context, however, to provide a full picture of a person’s identity.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/race/> and *The Associated Press*

Roma, Romani, Romany

A word used to indicate Romani (also spelled Romany) or Roma people, an ethnic group that lives in Europe and has branches in the Americas, Asia and North Africa. The word “Gypsy” (sometimes capitalized as a proper noun when referring to the ethnic group and sometimes spelled Gipsy) has negative connotations, and many Romani people see it as a racial slur. In general, it’s best to use Romani or Roma people when referring to the ethnic group unless people self-identify as Gypsies. Do not use the term “gyp,” which means to cheat or swindle, likely comes from Gypsy, and is seen as a negative stereotype of Roma as swindlers and thieves.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gypsy-gypsy-gipsy/>

South Asia, South Asian

South Asia or Southern Asia is a term used to represent the southern region of the Asian continent. It is bounded on the south by the Indian Ocean and on land by West Asia, Central Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia. The terms Indian subcontinent and South Asia are both used to describe the region. South Asia includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

South Asian is the term for people who trace their origin to the subcontinent. Do not use East Indian.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/south-asia/>

Southeast Asia, Southeast Asian

A subregion of Asia that consists of the countries that are geographically south of China, east of India, west of New Guinea and north of Australia. Southeast Asia consists of two geographic regions: Maritime Southeast Asia, which includes Brunei, Christmas Island, East Malaysia, East Timor, Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore; and Mainland Southeast Asia, also known as Indochina, which includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Vietnam and West Malaysia.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/southeast-asia-southeastern-asia/>

Third World

Do not use because of its negative connotations; use “developing countries” or “developing world” instead to describe nations of the world that are considered less economically and technologically advanced.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/third-world/>

turban

A head covering in desert or other hot climates that does not necessarily have ethnic or religious significance and is not solely Arab. People wear turbans for different reasons, and there are different types of turbans. Sikh men wear turbans that peak at the forehead to take care of their hair, which they do not cut, and to promote equality among themselves and to declare their identity. Turbans make Sikhs distinctive in India, where they are a minority. In the United States, Sikhs have been attacked by people who assumed the turbans meant they were Muslims. Most Muslims do not wear turbans, though some may wear them. It’s typically spherical or conical. The shape of turbans varies by country.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/turban/>

White, white

This describes people in the United States who share a lineage that can be traced directly or indirectly to Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "White" or report entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian, which are ethnic identifiers. After much research and consideration, the editor of The Diversity Style Guide elected to capitalize Black and White when used in a racial context.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/white-white/>;
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/RHI625221#:~:text=the percent Hispanic.-,Definition,Arab%2C Moroccan%2C or Caucasian.>

Religion

Note: A person's religion should not be mentioned in storytelling materials unless relevant. This also applies to references to ethnicity, sexual orientation and ethnicity. These are generally relevant in a medical context, however, to provide a full picture of a person's identity.

Agnostic

A person who is unsure whether there is a God or who believes it is unknowable whether God exists. Sometimes, the former is referred to as weak agnosticism and the latter is called strong agnosticism. Do not confuse agnostic with atheist.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/agnostic/>

Atheist

A person who does not believe in God or other supernatural forces. Some people make the distinction between weak atheism (the idea that evidence does not support a belief in God) and strong atheism (being convinced that God does not exist).

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/atheist/>

Bahá'í, the Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith is a monotheistic religion. Its founder, Bahá'u'lláh, taught that all religions represent progressive stages in the revelation of God's will. There are no clergy; the faith's affairs are administered by a network of democratically elected councils. The terms Bahaimism and Bahaist are incorrect; use the *Bahá'í Faith* to refer to the religion and *Bahá'í* to refer to an adherent.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/bahai-the-bahai-faith/>

Buddhism

Founded in India and based on the teaching of Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha, or the awakened one. Buddhism teaches that meditation and the practice of moral behavior can lead to the elimination of personal craving and hence the release of suffering and the attainment of absolute peace (nirvana). Use "Buddhism" to refer to the religion and "Buddhist" to refer to an adherent.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/buddhism/>

Catholic, catholic

When capitalized, the word refers specifically to that branch of Christianity headed by the pope, the Roman Catholic Church. In lowercase, the word is a synonym for universal or worldwide, as in "He has catholic tastes in art." Most Roman Catholics are Western or Latin Catholics, meaning they follow church practice as it was formulated in Rome. But the Roman Catholic Church also includes 22 Eastern Catholic churches, whose practices closely resemble those of the Eastern Orthodox, including venerating icons, allowing a married priesthood and giving the three sacraments of initiation – baptism, First Communion and confirmation – to infants. Never refer to Eastern Catholics as Orthodox or vice versa. Use Roman Catholic if a distinction is being made between the church and members of other denominations who often describe themselves as Catholic, such as some High-Church Episcopalians and members of

some national Catholic churches that have broken with Rome (e.g., the Polish National Catholic Church and the Lithuanian National Catholic Church).

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/catholic-catholic/>

Christianity (Protestant)

The world's largest religion is based on the life and teachings of Jesus as described in the New Testament. Believers, called Christians, consider Jesus the Son of God, whose Crucifixion served as atonement for all human sins and whose Resurrection assures believers of life after death. The original Christians were Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Hebrew Bible; other Jews disagreed, however, and eventually Christianity became distinct from Judaism as the Apostle Paul and others spread the faith to gentiles. There are over 40,000 Christian denominations worldwide including mainline and evangelical churches.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/christianity/>

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, often informally known as the LDS Church or Mormon Church, is a nontrinitarian, Christian restorationist church that considers itself to be the restoration of the original church founded by Jesus Christ. Note the capitalization and punctuation of Latter-day. The church in 2018 began moving away from the widely recognized terms "Mormon church" and "LDS church," and now prefers that its full name be used and that members be referred to as "Latter-day Saints." The term Mormon is based on the church's sacred Book of Mormon and remains in common use by members of the faith.

Source: *AP Stylebook*

Eastern Orthodox

Group of Christian Churches that have roots in the earliest days of Christianity. Included in the Eastern Orthodox churches are the Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and Armenian Orthodox, as well as other, smaller churches based on the nationalities of various ethnic groups such as Bulgarians, Romanians and Syrians. Archbishops and bishops frequently follow a monastic tradition in which they are known only by first name. When no last name is used, repeat the title before the name in subsequent references. Archbishop may be replaced by the Most Rev. on first reference. Use the Rev. before the name of a priest on first reference. On second reference use only the cleric's last name.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/eastern-orthodox/>

Hindu, Hinduism

Hinduism, also known as Sanatana Dharma ("the eternal natural law"), is one of the world's most ancient religious and spiritual systems, third-largest religion, and encompasses a broad spectrum of philosophies. Followers believe that God (Brahman), the ultimate reality or truth, can be understood in various ways and often use the two terms interchangeably. This not only reflects the diversity of practice and perspective in Hinduism, but also the belief that this infinite reality is beyond the comprehension of undisciplined minds. Therefore, Hindus celebrate God's various attributes through

different representations. Most Hindus believe in one God, who is all-pervasive, though he or she may be worshipped in different forms, in different ways and by different names. As such, Hinduism can be described as monotheistic and henotheistic: monotheistic in its belief in one God and henotheistic in that any one God can be worshipped without denying the existence of other forms or manifestations of God. A basic belief in Hinduism is that the soul does not die but is reborn into another life form when the body dies.

Hindus have no formal clergy but do have spiritual teachers, or gurus. Capitalize “guru” before a name on first reference, and use only the last name on second reference. “Swami” is a title of respect and reverence conferred on a religious teacher and, in particular, one who has taken vows of celibacy and renunciation; it, too, should be capitalized before a name.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/hindu-hinduism/>

Humanist

A rationalist who believes that humanity is capable of morality and self-fulfillment without reliance on supernaturalism.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/humanist/>

imam

Pronounced “ee-MAHM.” In everyday use, any person in the Muslim community who leads a congregational prayer. Traditionally, only men have been imams, although women are allowed to serve as imams for other women. To lead prayers, one does not have to be a cleric. In a more formal sense, an imam is a religious leader, but can also be a political leader. On first reference, uppercase “imam” when preceding a proper name. On second reference, use only the person’s last name. Uppercase “imam” when referencing the Twelve Imams.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/imam/>

Islam

Religion founded in seventh-century Mecca by the Prophet Muhammad, who said Allah (God), through the Angel Gabriel, revealed the Quran to him between 610 and 632, the year of his death. Followers of Islam are called Muslims. They worship in a mosque, and their weekly holy day is Friday. Islam is the second-largest religion in the world, after Christianity. After Muhammad’s death, Islam split into two distinct branches — Sunni and Shiite — in an argument over who would succeed him. Sunnis make up an estimated 85 percent of all Muslims. Shiites are the majority in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain, while Sunnis are the majority in other Islamic countries. In Sunni and Shiite Islam, there are various madhhabs, or schools of thought, and other theological traditions. There is no central religious authority, so theological and legal interpretations can vary from region to region, country to country and even mosque to mosque.

Capitalize all Islamic titles when used before a name and lowercase otherwise. Use the title and name on first reference and only the person’s last name after that.

Because the Quran is in Arabic, it is a common misconception that all Arabs are Muslim, and all Muslims are Arab; neither is true.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/islam/>

Islamic

This is an adjective used to describe the religion of Islam. It is not synonymous with Islamist, which is an advocate or supporter of a political movement that favors reordering government and society in accordance with laws prescribed by Islam.

Muslim is a noun and is the proper term for individual believers.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/islamic/>

Jehovah's Witness

A religious group that believes in one God, referred to by the Hebrew name Jehovah. Jesus is considered to be Lord and Savior but inferior to God. Jehovah's Witnesses are not recognized as Christian by the Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant traditions, primarily because they do not believe in the Trinity. Adherents do not salute the flag, bear arms or participate in politics. They also refuse blood transfusions. Jehovah's Witnesses have no formal clergy titles and do not use honorifics such as the Rev. They refer to baptized members who evangelize as publishers and those who devote greater time to ministry activities as regular pioneers. Full-time workers are called special pioneers. Their gathering places are called Kingdom Halls, not churches.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/jehovahs-witness/>

Jew

Follower of the Jewish faith. Tradition holds that people are Jewish if their mothers are Jewish or if they have gone through a formal process of conversion, but some Jews argue for a more liberal definition. Many Jews consider themselves "secular Jews" whose connection to Judaism is cultural or ethnic rather than spiritual. Jews believe that God called their ancestor, Abraham, to be the father of their nation, and that through him and his descendants a covenant was transmitted to future generations. Use "Jew" for men and women.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/jew/>

Judaism

The religion of the Jewish people. Its beliefs and history are a major foundation for other Abrahamic religions, including Christianity and Islam. It traces a covenant between the Jewish people and God that began with Abraham and continued through Jacob, Moses, David, and others to today's modern Jews. Jews believe that the Messiah will one day establish a divine kingdom on earth, opening an era of peace and bliss. They believe that God called their ancestor, Abraham, to be the father of their nation, which works toward the goal of establishing this kingdom. Throughout history, Jews have been heavily persecuted. The Holocaust is the most high-profile example. There are three major branches of Judaism: Reform Jews are the largest branch in the U.S., followed by Conservative and Orthodox Jews. Reconstructionist Judaism and Renewal Judaism are

smaller branches that developed in the 20th century. Many races and nationalities are represented within Judaism.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/judaism/>

Muslim American

Do not hyphenate as a noun. Do hyphenate, however, when the term is used as a compound modifier, as in “Muslim-American community.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/muslim-american/>

Muslim, Muslims

A Muslim is a follower of Muhammad and the tenets and practices of Islam. The word Muslim is a noun; use the adjective Islamic when referring to the Islamic faith or the Islamic world.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/muslim-muslims/>

pagan

Generally, a person who does not practice Judaism, Christianity, or Islam and who is a worshipper of a polytheistic religion. Many pagans follow an Earth-based or nature religion. Some pagans prefer to see the term capitalized.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/pagan/>

Quakers

The formal name is the Religious Society of Friends, but Quakers can be used in all references. Members typically refer to themselves as “Friends.” Historically, Quakers are considered Christian. Some Quakers today consider themselves nontheistic. Their worship and business gatherings are called meetings. Although there is no recognized ranking of clergy over lay people, meeting officers are called elders or ministers, and these terms should be capitalized when used before a name. Many Quaker ministers in the Midwest and West use the Rev. before their names.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/quakers/>

Quran

Pronounced “ku-RAHN,” this is the holy book of Islam, which Muslims believe is the direct word of God as dictated in Arabic to Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel during the month of Ramadan beginning in 610 to about 632. The Quran contains laws for society, as well as descriptions of heaven and hell and warnings about the end of the world. It also includes stories of figures found in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, but Muslims believe the Quran supersedes those holy writings. “Quran” is the preferred spelling and is capitalized in all references. The spelling “Koran” should only be used if it is in a specific title or name.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/quran/>

rabbi

This is the Hebrew word for teacher and the title used by Jewish clergy. On first reference, capitalize before a name.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/rabbi/>

Shiism, Shiite

Shiism (*shee-ism*) is the name of the smaller of the two major branches of Islam. It developed after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, when his followers split over who would lead Islam. The Shiism branch favored Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. Its followers are called Shiites (*shee-aits*). Use Shiite instead of Shi'ah unless in a quote or as part of a name. Uppercase in all uses.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/shiism-shiite/>

Sikhism

The traditional pronunciation is "SICK-ism," but it is commonly pronounced "SEEK-ism." The Sikh religion is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world. Followers are called Sikhs (meaning students). It originated in 15th-century Punjab (now North India and Pakistan) when Guru Nanak, the first Sikh teacher, turned against the caste system, forced conversion and empty ritual.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/sikhism/>

Sunni

Pronounced "SOO-nee." The largest denomination in Islam, followed by about 85% of Muslims. The plural form is "Sunnis."

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/sunni/>

Torah

The Jewish sacred writings found in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Also called "the Five Books of Moses," the Torah is copied by specialized scribes onto parchment scrolls and is treated with great care and respect by Jewish congregations. The term Torah is sometimes also used to describe the larger body of Jewish law and Scripture.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/torah/>

Unitarian Universalist

The Unitarian Universalist Association encourages a wide spectrum of belief. Many members believe in God, but atheists also find home in this denomination. Unitarian Universalists do not believe Jesus was divine and are not considered Christians, although they would welcome Christians – or just about anyone – in their churches. They employ a congregational form of government.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/unitarian-universalist/>

Wicca

There are many forms of Wicca, but most share a worship of the divine feminine, or Goddess, and a reverence for nature and its cycles. It is traditionally believed to be based on the symbols, celebrations, beliefs and deities of ancient Celtic peoples.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/wicca/>

Xmas

Do not use this shortened form of the word Christmas.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/xmas/>

yarmulke

Pronounced “YAH-mi-kuh,” it is the Yiddish name for the skullcap traditionally worn by Jewish men in synagogue and by some Jews at all times. It is a symbol of humility and submission to God. It is sometimes also referred to by its Hebrew name, kippah (or kippa), which means “dome.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/yarmulke/>

Sex and gender

agender/gender neutral

A person who identifies as neither male nor female. It is best to ask people who identify as agender which pronouns they use by saying “my pronouns are [“she/her,” “they/them,” “he/him”], what are yours?” Use the name and personal pronouns that are consistent with how the individual lives publicly. In clinical practice, ask if they use those pronouns in the presence of their caregiver(s), and if they would like their pronouns documented in their medical record or intentionally omitted.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/agender/>

androgynous

A person whose sex is not readily apparent or who has neither masculine nor feminine gender expression. It is best to ask people who identify as androgynous which pronouns they use by saying “my pronouns are [“she/her,” “they/them,” “he/him”], what are yours?” Use the name and personal pronouns that are consistent with how the individual lives publicly. In clinical practice, ask if they use those pronouns in the presence of their caregiver(s), and if they would like their pronouns documented in their medical record or intentionally omitted.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/androgynous/>

boy, girl

Generally acceptable to describe males or females younger than 18. While it is always inaccurate to call people younger than 18 men or women and people ages 18 and older boys or girls, be aware of nuances and unintentional implications. Referring to Black males of any age and in any context as boys, for instance, can be perceived as demeaning and call to mind historical language used by some to address Black men. Be specific about ages if possible, or refer to Black youths as child, teen or similar.

Source: *AP Stylebook*

chosen name, name used

The name a person goes by and wants others to use in personal communication, even if it is different from the name on that person’s legal documents (e.g., birth certificate, driver’s license, and passport). The term “Chosen name” is recommended over

“preferred name.” Clinically, the terms “chosen name” or “name used” can be put on patient healthcare forms alongside “Name on your insurance (if different)” and “Name on your legal identification documents (if different).” In conversation with patients, healthcare staff can ask, “What name do you want us to use when speaking with you?” or “What is your chosen name?”

Source: [Glossary-2020.08.30.pdf \(lgbtqiahealtheducation.org\)](#)

chosen pronouns

The pronouns (he, she, they, or something else) that match and affirm a person’s gender identity. Some people simply say “pronouns,” as in “what are your pronouns? Mine are she/her.” Avoid using the term “preferred pronouns.” Someone’s pronouns are not a preference, but rather the only appropriate way to refer to that person. The term “preferred pronouns” is only appropriate when someone uses more than one set of pronouns and has a preference for one over the other.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/?s=preferred+pronouns+and+PFLAG>
[National Glossary of Terms | PFLAG](#)

cisgender, cis

A term used by some to describe people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. A more widely understood, and thus preferred, way to describe people whose gender identity aligns with their sex is simply to say non-transgender people. “cis” is a Latin prefix meaning “on the same side as,” and is therefore an antonym of “trans-.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/925/>

dead name, deadname

As a noun, this is the birth name of somebody who has changed their name. It is most commonly used by trans people. It can be written as “deadname” or “dead name.” As a verb, it means to call someone by their deadname. Use caution not to use one’s dead name, as it can be very hurtful to someone who now uses a different name.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/dead-name-deadname/>

different sex

This is the preferred alternate to the term “opposite sex.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/different-sex/>

FTM/MTF/FTN/MTN/FT*/MT*

These are acronyms to describe a transgender or transsexual individual. The first letter is the assigned birth sex; the second letter T is for “to,” signifying transition; and the third letter is the destination gender, the person’s affirmed gender. The * indicates inclusivity of all variations of trans people, as not all identify with a particular gender.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/ftm-mtf-ftn-mtn-ft-mt/>

gender diverse

Gender diverse refers to the extent to which a person’s gender identity, role, or expression differs from the cultural norms prescribed for people of a particular sex. This

term is becoming more popular as a way to describe people without reference to a particular cultural norm, in a manner that is more affirming and potentially less stigmatizing than gender nonconformity.

Source: <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf>

gender expansive

Gender expansive is an umbrella term used for individuals who broaden their own culture's commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for its expression, identities, roles, and /or other perceived gender norms.

Source: <https://genderspectrum.org/articles/language-of-gender>

gender expression

This is the external presentation of gender (e.g., name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, mannerisms, voice or body characteristics). Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression align with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-expression/>

gender fluidity

Gender fluidity conveys when an individual identifies with a wider, more flexible range of gender expression, with interests and behaviors that may even change from day to day. Gender-fluid people do not feel confined by restrictive boundaries of stereotypical expectations of girls or boys. In other words, a child may feel they are a girl some days and a boy on others, or possibly feel that neither term describes them accurately. Ask people who are gender fluid which pronouns they use at each encounter. Use the name and personal pronouns that are consistent with how the individual lives publicly. In clinical practice, ask if they use those pronouns in the presence of their caregiver(s), and if they would like their pronouns documented in their medical record or intentionally omitted.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-fluidity/>

gender identity

One's internal, deeply held sense of one's gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people in the U.S. have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Gender identity is not visible to others and cannot be presumed; it is only experienced by the individual (This is a clear difference between gender expression).

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-identity/>

gender spectrum

A model of gender that breaks the gender binary and considers the infinite variations of gender.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-spectrum/>

gender transition

The process by which transgender, non-binary, and agender people change their social, physical, and/or sexual characteristics from those associated with their sex at birth. This process occurs over time and may include adopting the aesthetic markers of the new, correct gender (e.g., clothing, hair, voice); telling one's family, friends and/or co-workers; using affirming names and pronouns with others; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and gender confirming surgery. Transition is tailored to each individual's needs. For example, not all transgender people want hormonal or surgical interventions. Never use the outdated terms "sex change" and "sexual reassignment."

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-transition/>

gender-affirming care/transition-related medical care

A broad term for health care transgender people may pursue, including counseling, hormone replacement therapy and surgical treatments. Not all transgender people pursue every form of medical treatment available. When writing about medical care, use general language and terms like "gender-affirming medical care" or "transition-related medical care." When appropriate and necessary, use the official name of a surgery or treatment. For example, when describing surgical changes to a transmasculine person's chest, use the terms chest reconstruction surgery or chest masculinization surgery. "Breast reduction" is not appropriate because transmasculine individuals generally do not refer to their chest tissue as breasts.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-affirming-care-transition-related-medical-care/>

gender-neutral pronouns

Some people don't feel that traditional gender pronouns, such as she/her and he/him, reflect their gender identities. Transgender, genderqueer and other people who step outside the male-female gender paradigm often adopt new pronouns for themselves. It's best to ask which pronouns a person they use. Use the name and personal pronouns that are consistent with how the individual lives publicly. In clinical practice, ask if they use those pronouns in the presence of their caregiver(s), and if they would like their pronouns documented in their medical record or intentionally omitted.

When writing about someone whose gender isn't known or in a general sense (e.g., a generalized patient in a pamphlet), use "they" rather than "he," "she" or "he or she." Consider adding your pronouns to your email signature or screen name to make this task easier on others.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-neutral-pronouns/>

gender-neutral terms

Favor gender-neutral terms whenever possible. Avoid constructions like "he or she", "he/she" and "s/he".

Use this

Avoid this

they, them	he, she
their	his, her
folks, team, y'all	guys, gals
chair, moderator, chairperson	chairman
humanity, people, humankind	man, mankind
other hospital campus	sister school, sister campus
legacy status, preexisting	grandfathered
counterpart, indispensable	right-hand man
person hours or engineer hours or level of effort (hours)	man hours, manpower
person-in-the-middle	man-in-the-middle

Source: <https://developers.google.com/style/inclusive-documentation#replace-or-write-around-non-inclusive-terms>

Genderqueer

A term used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for transgender and should only be used if someone self-identifies as genderqueer.

People who identify as genderqueer sometimes don't feel comfortable being referred to by standard pronouns like he and she; when possible, ask which pronouns they use.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/genderqueer/>

intersex

An adjective, this is an umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that can't be classified as typically male or female. Those variations are also sometimes referred to as Differences of Sex Development (DSD). Do not use outdated and derogatory term "hermaphrodite." While some people can have an intersex condition and also identify as transgender, the two are separate.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/intersex-adj/>

LGBT/GLBT/LGBTQ/LGBTQQIA*/TLGBQ

LGBT is an abbreviation for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender" and should be explained in the first or in an early reference. For example, on first reference, write, "Joseph was involved in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender – or LGBT – movement." On second reference, for example, you could write, "Joseph was secretary of his school's LGBT Pride Club."

The Q in LGBTQ can stand for either questioning (still exploring one's sexuality) or queer, or sometimes both, and it is sometimes written LGBTQQ. LGBTQ is best used only in quotations or for formal names of organizations or events.

In recent years, initials have been added to represent Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, Polyamorous. LGBTQIA and LGBTQQIA, sometimes with a * at the end, are increasingly being used to represent the community.

TLGBQ is also used to “lift up” the oft marginalized status of trans members of the community.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/lgbtqlbtqlgbtqgia/>

nonbinary, non-binary

This is an umbrella term for people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary of man and woman. While nonbinary (sometimes written with a hyphen, non-binary,) is considered a trans identity, some people who identify as nonbinary do not consider themselves transgender. When possible, ask the person how they refer to themselves. Some people define their gender as falling somewhere on a spectrum between man and woman, some may see their gender as fluid and others may define gender in different terms altogether.

Some Indigenous communities and other cultures have other words to describe gender variance, including Two-Spirit (sometimes written two spirit) and Third Gender. People who identify as nonbinary often don’t feel comfortable being referred to by conventional pronouns like he and she; when possible, ask which pronouns they use.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/nonbinary-non-binary/>

non-transgender people, person

This is a more widely understood, and thus preferred, way to describe people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. Also see “cisgender.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/925/>

opposite sex

This term can be seen as offensive or inaccurate for people who don’t identify as male or female or who see gender as a continuum rather than a binary construct. Use the phrase “different sex” instead.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/opposite-sex/>

pronouns

A person’s pronouns may or may not tell you about their gender identity; a pronoun is just a term that they want you to use when referring to them. Anyone of any gender identity can go by any pronoun. People choose whichever pronouns make them feel safe and respected. Some pronouns used by someone who may identify as feminine, masculine, nonbinary, gender fluid, or another gender include she/her, he/him, they/them, ze/zir, xie/hir, she/they, he/they, she/he/they, he/she/they, fa/faer/faers, and xe/xem/xyr. This list is not complete and represents the common pronouns used in our society as of 2023. We don’t need to know or understand someone’s identity to treat them with respect. It is best to ask which pronouns a person uses. Ask if they use these pronouns in the presence of their caregiver and if they would like their chosen pronouns to be documented in their medical record or intentionally omitted.

sex assigned at birth (SAAB), AMAB, AFAB

The sex assigned to a person at birth based on their anatomy. This is referred to as sex assigned at birth because it is not and/or never was the person's true gender. They were born as Z, but were assigned X/Y, due to bio-typical or closely matching genitalia of one of the pre-existing binary sexes: male (AMAB) or female (AFAB). Avoid saying "biological male" or "biological female." *Source:*

<https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gender-assigned-at-birth-gaab-maab-faab/>

Two-spirit, Third Gender

These are ways that some Indigenous communities and other cultures describe people who experience their gender identify and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary of man and woman. Another umbrella term for this is "nonbinary" (sometimes written with a hyphen, "non-binary").

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/nonbinary-non-binary/>

transgender

Refers to people whose gender identity and/or expression may not match their physical, sexual characteristics or sex assigned at birth. Some female and male cross-dressers, drag queens or kings, female or male impersonators and intersex individuals may also identify as transgender but these are not synonymous terms. Use the name and personal pronouns that are consistent with how the individual lives publicly.

Transgender people may use a number of terms to describe themselves. Ask which term the person uses. In cases without a stated identifier or when speaking generally, use "transgender man/woman/person." Take efforts to use transgender as an adjective, not a noun. When describing a group, use "transgender people," not "transgenders." The terms "transgenders" or "transgendered" are offensive. In cases where space is an issue, such as headlines, using "trans" as a shorthand adjectival form is acceptable.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/transgender/>

transsexual

Do not use this outdated term unless a person or community identifies with the term; it can carry misleading medical connotations.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/transsexual/>

transvestite

Do not use this outdated term. Use "cross-dresser" instead.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/transvestite/>

they

Use "they" when one's gender is unknown. Use also instead of "he," "she" or "he or she" when speaking generally.

Sexuality

Note: A person's sexuality should not be mentioned storytelling materials unless relevant. This also applies to references to ethnicity, race and religion. These are

generally relevant in a medical context, however, to provide a full picture of a person's identity.

ally, accomplice

An ally is anyone from a dominant or majority group who works toward ending oppression by supporting and advocating for those in marginalized and oppressed groups.

An accomplice is an ally who uses their power and privilege to challenge the status quo, often risking their physical and social well-being. All accomplices are allies, but not all allies are accomplices. While an ally is willing to stand in support of a marginalized voice, risk is rarely involved.

Source: <https://pitt.libguides.com/antiracism/ally>

asexual

A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people can and do experience other forms of attraction and intimacy, such as aesthetic, emotional, platonic or romantic, and they may describe their romantic attraction in terms of hetero-/homo-/bi-/pan-, etc.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/asexual/>

gay

A sexual orientation describing people who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. Commonly used to describe men who are primarily attracted to men but can also describe women attracted to women. "Gay" is preferred over "homosexual," which connotes clinical context or references to sexual activity. Avoid using as a singular noun.

For women, "lesbian" is generally used, but, when possible, ask how the person identifies. To include both, use gays and lesbians.

Source: [https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gay/ and Glossary-2020.08.30.pdf \(lgbtqiahealtheducation.org\)](https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/gay/ and Glossary-2020.08.30.pdf (lgbtqiahealtheducation.org))

heterosexual

An adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to people of a different sex.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/heterosexual/>

homosexual

A term to describe gay, lesbian, or queer people which may be offensive depending on the speaker. Originally used as a scientific or clinical term to describe LGBTQ+ people, the word has been reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community and may be colloquially used by an LGBTQ+ person to reference themselves or another member of the community. Non-LGBTQ+ people should avoid using the term.

Source: [PFLAG National Glossary of Terms | PFLAG](https://www.pflag.org/national-glossary-of-terms)

lesbian

This is the preferred term, both as a noun and adjective, for women who are attracted to other women. Some non-binary people may also identify as lesbian. Some women identify with “gay” rather than “lesbian;” ask the how the person they identify.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/lesbian/>;
<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lgbtqi/resources/definitions>

LGBT/GLBT/LGBTQ/LGBTQQA*/TLGBQ

LGBT is an abbreviation for “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender” and should be explained in the first or in an early reference. For example, on first reference, write, “Joseph was involved in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender – or LGBT – movement.” On second reference, for example, you could write, “Joseph was secretary of his school’s LGBT Pride Club.”

The Q in LGBTQ can stand for either questioning (still exploring one’s sexuality) or queer, or sometimes both, and it is sometimes written LGBTQQ. LGBTQ is best used only in quotations or for formal names of organizations or events.

In recent years, initials have been added to represent Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, Polyamorous. LGBTQIA and LGBTQQA, sometimes with a * at the end, are increasingly being used to represent the community.

TLGBQ is also used to “lift up” the oft marginalized status of trans members of the community.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/lgbtqlblqbtqlqbtqqa/>

pansexual, omnisexual

This describes someone whose primary attraction is to a person, regardless of their gender. Because the labels heterosexual and homosexual imply the gender of both the person and the object of their attraction, it is often difficult or irrelevant to identify with these labels when a person’s gender is non-binary. For this reason, many people opt for the label pansexual or omnisexual.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/pansexual-omnisexual/>

Queer

An umbrella term describing people who think of their sexual orientation or gender identity as outside of societal norms. Some people view the term queer as more fluid and inclusive than traditional categories for sexual orientation and gender identity. Although queer was historically used as a slur, it has been reclaimed by many as a term of empowerment. Nonetheless, some still find the term offensive. Queer is not universally accepted even within the LGBT community and should be used with caution unless describing someone who self-identifies that way or in a direct quote.

Source: [Glossary-2020.08.30.pdf \(lgbtqihealtheducation.org\)](#)

relationships

Straight, lesbian, gay and bisexual people all use various terms to describe their personal commitments (e.g., partner, girlfriend/boyfriend, wife/husband, etc.). If

possible, ask individuals which term they prefer (e.g., “tell me about who is here with you”), or listen carefully and use whatever term they use. If not or unknown, “partner” is generally acceptable.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/relationships/>

sexual orientation

This describes an individual’s enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay bisexual, pansexual or asexual. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would identify as a straight woman.

Do not use the term “sexual preference,” which implies that sexuality is the result of a conscious choice.

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/sexual-orientation/>

sexually transmitted diseases (STD)

Sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs, are diseases that result from STIs. All STDs start out as infections. Pathogens enter the body and begin multiplying. When these pathogens disrupt normal body functions or damage structures in the body, they become STDs. However, some STIs may never develop into diseases. For example, most HPV cases go away on their own without causing health problems. In these instances, the HPV is an STI. If the HPV infection develops into genital warts or cervical cancer, then it is considered an STD.

Source: <https://publichealth.tulane.edu/blog/sti-vs-std/>

sexually transmitted infection (STI)

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that have not yet developed into disease, and can include bacteria, viruses, or parasites such as pubic lice. They are usually transmitted during sexual activities through an exchange of bodily fluids or skin-to-skin contact where the infection is active. Nonsexual activities in which bodily fluids are exchanged can also transmit STIs. For example, people who share needles can infect each other with HIV.

Source: <https://publichealth.tulane.edu/blog/sti-vs-std/>

straight

This term describes a person whose sexual and affectional attraction is to someone of a different sex, or a heterosexual person. As a noun, “heterosexual” or “straight person.”

Source: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/straight/>

Problematic words and phrases

Unfortunately, some words and phrases commonly used in business settings may have problematic, racist, misogynistic or ableist origins. Here are some common expressions and phrases that ought to be eliminated from workplace communication.

Use this

allowlist, safelist
denylist, blocklist
glass box testing, clear box testing
functional testing, acceptance testing
built-in feature
core concept, top-level
maintenance, upkeep
smoke test, quick check, confidence
check, coherence check
placeholder value or sample value
hinder
ignore
inconsiderate, thoughtless, careless

Not this

whitelist
blacklist
white box
black box
native feature
first-class citizen
housekeeping tasks
sanity check

dummy value
cripple
blind to, deaf to
tone deaf

Source: <https://developers.google.com/style/inclusive-documentation>;

drink the Kool-Aid

We all want committed associates, but this phrase makes light of the Jonestown massacre, which left 918 people dead from cyanide-laced Kool-Aid.

Fall on deaf ears

Being deaf is an involuntary state, whereas hearing people who let pleas “fall on deaf ears” are making a conscious choice to ignore those requests. Labelling them “deaf” frames them as passive, rather than people actively responsible for their own decisions. The same principle applies to “turn a blind eye.”

Grandfather clause or grandfathering in

This term started in the wake of Reconstruction in the American South to allow potential White voters to circumvent literacy tests, poll taxes and other tactics designed to disenfranchise Southern Black people after a brief period of relatively open voting.

handicapped, emotionally crippled, or lame

These terms perpetuate ableism, the social prejudice that people with disabilities are inferior.

long time, no see

This phrase originated as a mockery of Native Americans’ broken English. Similarly, “no can do” mocked Chinese immigrants.

low on the totem pole

A totem pole is a sacred cultural artifact; this phrase belittles it. This also applies to “spirit animal.”

Nazi

Using this term casually makes light of the horrible atrocities committed by the Nazi party in Europe.

Ninja

This word is often used to express expertise, but use seldom shows regard for its original culture and context. The term’s origins refer to “a member of a feudal Japanese society of mercenary agents, highly trained in martial arts and stealth (ninjutsu), who were hired for covert purposes ranging from espionage to sabotage and assassination.” Similarly, “guru” is often mis-used. Alternatives for both include “expert,” “whiz” or “ace.”

Open the kimono

This phrase – intended to describe the act of showing the inner workings of a business or organization – is inappropriate and rooted in misogyny and racism.

peanut gallery

This term stems from the section in vaudeville-era theaters where Black patrons were forced to sit.

Powwow

Use only when referring to the title of a specific American Indian event. Do not use to refer to a general gathering because the term evokes a stereotypical image of American Indians.

sexy new product, sexy topic

This phrasing is inappropriate for the workplace. In general, avoid tying something’s inherent value to its attractiveness.

sold down the river

Like “slave driver,” this is a reference to the slave trade.

squaw

Originally translated as “woman” in the Indigenous Algonquian language, today the “S-word” is an ethnic and sexual slur.

stakeholder

Although the term is used across many disciplines to reflect different levels of input or investment in projects or activities, it can be used to reflect a power differential between groups and has a violent connotation for some tribes and tribal members. It also groups all parties into one term, despite potential differences in the way they are engaged or interact with a project or activity. Consider using terms like contributors, community members, working partners, coalition members, and implementing partners.

tribe

Often used as a cutesy way to describe like-minded people, “tribe” has colonial origins as a bureaucratic term forced on Native Americans and incorrectly applied to many Africans

uppity

This racist term was historically used in the South to describe a Black person who a White person believed was stepping out of their place.

you guys

Positing men as the status quo excludes women and non-binary folks.

you look so young

This micro-aggression glorifies youth and perpetuates ageism.

you’re so articulate

This implies that the speaker is surprised by someone’s ability (often a woman or person of color) to speak well.

Sources: <https://www.outsidebusinessjournal.com/issues/offensive-words-and-phrases-to-eliminate-from-your-business-communications/>;
<https://www.fastcompany.com/90239290/six-business-phrases-that-have-racist-origins>;
<https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/powwow/>;
<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210330-the-harmful-ableist-language-you-unknowingly-use>; <https://www.thesaurus.com/e/ways-to-say/stop-using-in-2020/>;
<https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/blog/posting.htm?id=reflecting-on-our-language-stakeholder> and https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Preferred_Terms.html