

DOCUMENT-LEVEL STYLE

USE BIAS FREE LANGUAGE.

Whenever a person designs something textual, visual, or aural for publication in a professional or academic context, that person must never knowingly use language which is demeaning or challenges the equity of the opposite gender. This practice is deemed more appropriate and ethical than just political or politically correct.

Ideally, you want to write well and without a bias that adversely affects your audience. Thus, you want to be conscious of age, disability, gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and intersectionality.

Here are a few guidelines:

AGE

When writing about ages, use exact ages or age ranges rather than broad categories of age.

Example: under 18 years old, over 65 years old, etc.

Revised: 13-18, 65-85, etc.

DISABILITY

When writing about disability, use specific conditions rather than broad categories.

Example: Types of dementia, anxiety disorders, autism, mental retardation, senility, etc.

Revised: Alzheimer's Disease, Panic Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down's Syndrome, Dementia, etc.

RACE/ETHNICITY/CULTURE

When writing about racial or cultural/ethnic groups, the national or regional origin should be emphasized rather than generalized origin.

Example: Asian Americans

Revised: Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Laotian-Americans

Furthermore, terminology regarding ethnicity can be tricky. Many political and cultural influences affect the terminology we used to describe different races and ethnicities.

People of African Origin are currently and compassionately labeled as Black, while others prefer African-American.

People of Asian Origin are currently and compassionately labeled as Asian American or Asian Canadian, etc. Never use the simple term Asian or even the term Oriental, which usually refers to cultural objects rather than people.

People of Europe Origin are currently and compassionately labeled as White, while others may prefer more specific designations such as Scandinavian or Southern European. Including regional or national identity is preferable if needed (e.g., Polish, French, Italian, etc.)

Indigenous People are often named by a particular people or tribe. Thus, Aboriginal People, Maori, Alaska Natives, Inuit (not Eskimo), Native American, Pacific Islander, Cherokee, Ojibwa, Yavapai, Navajo/Diné, etc.

Middle Easterners or People of North African Descent should be labeled by their country of origin (e.g., Lebanese, etc.). Americans of Middle Eastern Origin may be termed, Arab Americans.

People of Hispanic or Latinx Origins may be termed by their ancestry or national identity (e.g., Mexican, Portuguese, Spanish, Brazilian, etc.)

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

When writing about socioeconomic status, use specific income ranges rather than general labels about wealth or poverty.

Example: low income, poor

Revised: below the federal poverty threshold for a family of four

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

When writing about sexual orientation and expression, the names of specific orientations/expressions are more desirable than general labels/terms.

Example: gay, straight, etc.

Revised: lesbians/homosexual women, homosexual men, bisexual men, heterosexual men, bisexual men, bisexual women, asexual men, etc.

GENDER IDENTITY

When writing about gender identity, use descriptors with modifiers.

Example: women

Revised: cisgendered women, transgendered women, etc.

Recognize that "gender" refers to behaviors, attitudes, and feelings. Whereas, "sex" refers to biological assignment at birth and reproductive function. Use gender rather than sex to describe differences between male and female subjects. Additionally, be aware that some individuals may have a biological sex which is expressed differently in terms of gender. These tendencies are easily explained by modern science. For example, many cases of gender dysphoria can be attributed to cases of autism or neurological differences. Likewise, differences in gendered behavior can be related to hormonal insufficiencies or other natural causes. Put simply, biological sex and gender are extremely complicated and complex processes. Be sensitive to your fellow human beings.

LIMIT GENDER BIAS.

1. Try to avoid terms which might be deemed sexist:

Example: Policeman (worse)

Revised: Police Officer (better)

Example: Mankind (worse)

Revised: Humankind (better)

Example: Businessman (worse)

Revised: Business person (better)

Example: Fireman (worse)

Revised: Firefighter (better)

2. Use gender-neutral pronouns.

Example: If a student is caught cheating, he must be turned into the Department Chair.
(worse)

Revised: If a student is caught cheating, they must be turned into the Department Chair.
(better)

(*) The phrasing "He/She" (or even "his/her") implies a gender binary, which can create some disgust or apprehension for certain audiences. Use "they" instead.

3. When you write, do not assume that a profession is strictly gendered (or possessing a fixed gender).

Example: The doctor should be available. He can remove your appendix if necessary.
(worse).

Revised: A doctor should be available. They can remove your appendix if necessary.
(better).

RESEARCH SUBJECTS

When writing about individuals who take part in research, use terms in the context of research rather than general or identifiable terms.

Example: people, children, women, schizophrenics, learning disabled, drug users, etc.

Revised: participants, patients, clients, research subjects, etc.

USE SENSITIVE EUPHEMISMS.

Example: old people, seniors, etc.

Revised: older adults, older individuals, etc.

Example: teenagers

Revised: young adults

Example: kids

Revised: children, adolescents

USE IDENTITY-FIRST LANGUAGE.

Recognize people first rather than conditions or afflictions. Be compassionate with your descriptions of others.

Example: blind person, autistic person, amputee, AIDS victim, etc.

Revised: person who is blind, person who is autistic, person with an amputation, person living with AIDS, etc.