



SOCIAL JUSTICE HANDBOOK

Loyola University Chicago Writing Center

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Land Recognition Statement

The Writing Center acknowledges, “the land that Loyola occupies, which includes the shore and waters of Lake Michigan, was also a site of trade, travel, gathering and healing for more than a dozen other Native tribes, including the Menominee, Michigamea, Miami, Kickapoo, Peoria and Ho-Chunk nations. The history of the entire city of Chicago is intertwined with histories of native peoples. The name Chicago is adopted from the Algonquin language, and the Chicagoland area is still home to the largest number of Native Americans in the Midwest, over 65,000.”ⁱ

Foreword

Oppressive language often makes its way into our writing without us even realizing it; unfortunately, this reflects “as well as [supports] oppressive systems.”ⁱⁱ Many tutors, and people in general, are hesitant to speak up about oppressive situations, particularly when coming from a position of privilege or where they lack education on the subject. Our hope is that this handbook will be able to provide tutors and clients alike with a discussion of social justice as it pertains to writing, with researched suggestions for best practices. Oftentimes, simply changing a few words in writing can show respect, understanding, and solidarity with marginalized groups. As a disclaimer, this handbook does not provide an exhaustive list of every possible encounter of oppressive language but attempts to cover the most common instances with the current accepted practices.



Gender

Sex

“A label assigned at birth based on the reproductive organs you’re born with.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Examples: Male, Female

Gender

Gender “goes beyond one’s reproductive organs and includes a person’s perception, understanding, and experience of themselves and roles in society.”^{iv}

(What someone identifies with)

Pronouns Usage

According to APA, phrases such as “identified pronouns,” “self-identified pronouns,” or “pronouns” are preferred to “*preferred* pronouns” because the latter implies a choice has been made about gender.^v

The Singular Pronoun: “They”

Using pronouns is extremely common in standard English writing conventions. However, there is some debate on pronouns, particularly the singular “they.” Words such as “he,” “she,” “they,” etc. are abundant in most written works, but are also limited in their scope. *Formal* English often assumes that the author understands the gender of the subject, that the subject aligns with binary gender. If the pronoun “they” were to be written, the typically plural pronoun is in agreement with the number of the antecedent. There has been a relatively recent shift from the usage of “he or she,” when the gender of the subject was unknown, to “they.” In effect, this makes the writing more succinct and gender inclusive; less words are used to create the same effect and the writer removes the implication that there are only two gender options: man and woman. However, some argue that “they” was traditionally designed for a plural subject. There is not yet an extensively agreed upon word in *collegiate* communities for a singular subject whose gender is unknown or non-binary.

With these concerns in mind, we have located the following research:

American Psychological Association (APA)	Modern Language Association (MLA)
<p>“The singular ‘they’ is a generic third-person singular pronoun in English. Use of the singular ‘they’ is endorsed as part of APA Style because it is inclusive of all people and helps writers avoid making assumptions about gender.”^{vi}</p>	<p>“While the singular ‘they’ is not uncommon in spoken English and in some informal contexts, in formal writing it is best to reword for agreement in number... But constructions such as “his or her” are often cumbersome, and some writers may find singular, gender-specific constructions insufficient, given that many people do not identify with a particular gender.”^{vii}</p>

Chicago Manual of Style	Associated Press (AP)
<p>The singular “they” was approved in the 14th edition, but later removed in the 15th and 16th editions. The current 17th edition allows the use of a singular they.^{viii}</p>	<p>“They/them/theirs is acceptable in limited cases as a singular and-or gender-neutral pronoun, when alternative wording is overly awkward or clumsy. However, rewording usually is possible and always is preferable. Clarity is a top priority; gender-neutral use of a singular ‘they’ is unfamiliar to many readers. We do not use other gender-neutral pronouns such as xe or ze”^{ix}</p>

Tips and Tricks:

Singular “they”

- Given the options avoid, some may opt to carry on with using the singular “they” in their papers. An option for proceeding this way could be to provide an **operational definition** either at the start of the piece or in a footnote.

Example:

“This paper will utilize the singular “they” to refer to non-binary subjects.”

Avoidance of Pronouns/Rewording Sentences

- Sentences can be **reworded to avoid using pronouns**: proper nouns can be replaced pronouns, or the sentence may be reconstructed in such a way that there are neither.

Example:

Instead of “When a student studies hard, she can experience burn-out”,

“When studying hard, a student can experience burn-out.” OR

“When students study hard, they can experience burn-out.”

Alternative Pronouns/Neopronouns

- Some individuals may use alternative pronouns (or “neopronouns”) including, but are not limited to, “ze”/”zir”/”zirs”, “ze”/”hir”/”hirs”, “ey”/”em”/”eirs”, etc. Many are wary of using these fewer mainstream pronouns, but it is recommended to **use the pronouns that are preferred by the subject**; if the subject prefers one of the alternative pronouns, usage is then recommended and is often accompanied by an operational definition.

Example:

“He bought a gift hir, so ze bought a gift for him in return. OR “He bought a gift for em, so ey bought a gift for him in return.”

Some may be tempted to use the pronoun “it” to eliminate the problem of misgendering. “It” is **never recommended** to be used to refer to a human being, as it is dehumanizing and incorrect.

In the event that this is a concern for the student, some writers can opt to have a **discussion with their professors** on which wording is more acceptable. We recommend this option prior to assignment submission if there are any questions or concerns on the part of the student when using gender-neutral pronouns.



Gendered Words

Gendered words are so frequently used in common language that it may seem innocuous to continue using them in formal language. However, many of these gendered nouns can very easily be replaced with gender-neutral and inclusive language. For example:

Examples of Gendered Terms	Creating Gender-Neutral Terms
Chairman, chairwoman	Chairperson, chair
Waitress	Waiter, server
Mailman	Mail carrier
Freshman	First-year student
Mankind, man	Humankind, humanity, humans
Man-made	Machine-made, synthetic, artificial
The common man	The average person

Binary and Sexist Language

- Avoid binary language such as “both genders” and “opposite gender” as this implies that there are only two genders.
 - Instead try: “other gender/s”

Historically, there is some language that has been used in either an overtly derogatory manner or are more discrete but are nonetheless harmful.

“The language of invective attempts to condition, through verbal aggression, how men and women should really act, that women should behave like more well-behaved, self-effacing women and men should behave ... well, not like women, well-behaved or otherwise”^x

Primarily female-referential terms and expressions with pasts that are seeded in sexist histories often perpetuate oppressive stereotypes and out to be used with caution.^{xi}

- Examples of Primarily Female-Referential Terms
 - Promiscuous, brainless, cold
 - Bossy, nasty, unhinged, hysterical, catty, etc.
- Expressions with Negative Historical Connotations
 - “Rule of Thumb”: Amongst feminist discussions, this phrase is said to have originated from English Common Law stating that a man may assault his wife with an object thinner than his thumb.^{xii} For this reason, this expression, and particular evidence supported sexist expression, and should be used at the writer’s discretion.

Titles

Perhaps less common in the Writing Center but prevalent in other aspect of writing is that of titles and prefixes for names. One problem with traditional prefixes is the distinction between “Ms.” And “Mrs.,” while men only have one option assigned to them. The historical implications of distinguishing married women from their unwed counterparts have long-standing effects, such that we are still making this distinction to this day when employing separate prefixes. As some seek to no longer impose a husband’s dominion over his wife, the safer choice will often be to utilize “Ms.,” implying an unspecified marital status, rather than “Mrs.” In instances where prefixes are omitted from the addressed name, some writers may also opt to treat female subjects differently from males, and entirely omits a possibility for non-binary individuals. Again, this problem is limited in its scope of gender options, with traditional gendered prefix options only available for men and women.

- In academic and professional settings, it is often preferred that writers use the subject’s professional title (ex. Dr., professor, etc.) as opposed to their gender specific prefix. ^{xiii}
- In the instance where the subject does not have an applicable professional title or it is unknown, the writer may choose to either use the traditional prefixes, avoid using any prefixes, or utilize gender neutral prefixes (Mx., Misc., Ind.).
- It is always most appropriate to use the recommended or preferred prefix of the individual being discussed, such as if a non-binary individual prefers gender neutral prefixes, this is what should be used.

Transgender Inclusive Writing

When writing in a gendered culture and language, it is important to recognize that not all identities are cisgender. This section will include tips to avoid overgeneralizations as well as how to address transgender identities in a respectful manner in writing.

Cisgender	<p>“Of, relating to, or being a person, whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth”^{xiv}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Refer to definition of sex and gender on page. #
Transgender	<p>“Of, relating to, or being a person, whose gender identity differs from the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth”^{xv}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Often used as an umbrella term to include nonbinary identities, gender nonconforming, etc.

It is also important to be respectful and affirmative in one’s language. This can be done by ensuring that one’s writing includes current language that is free from phrases that may have harmful connotations and assume ideas about the community that are not true. Phrases such as “female-bodied” and “male bodied” when describing trans individuals indicate that in order to be transgender, one must endure surgical intervention and present the physical appearance of gender set forth from societal expectations^{xvi}.

Other ways that one can make their language more affirmative include the following:

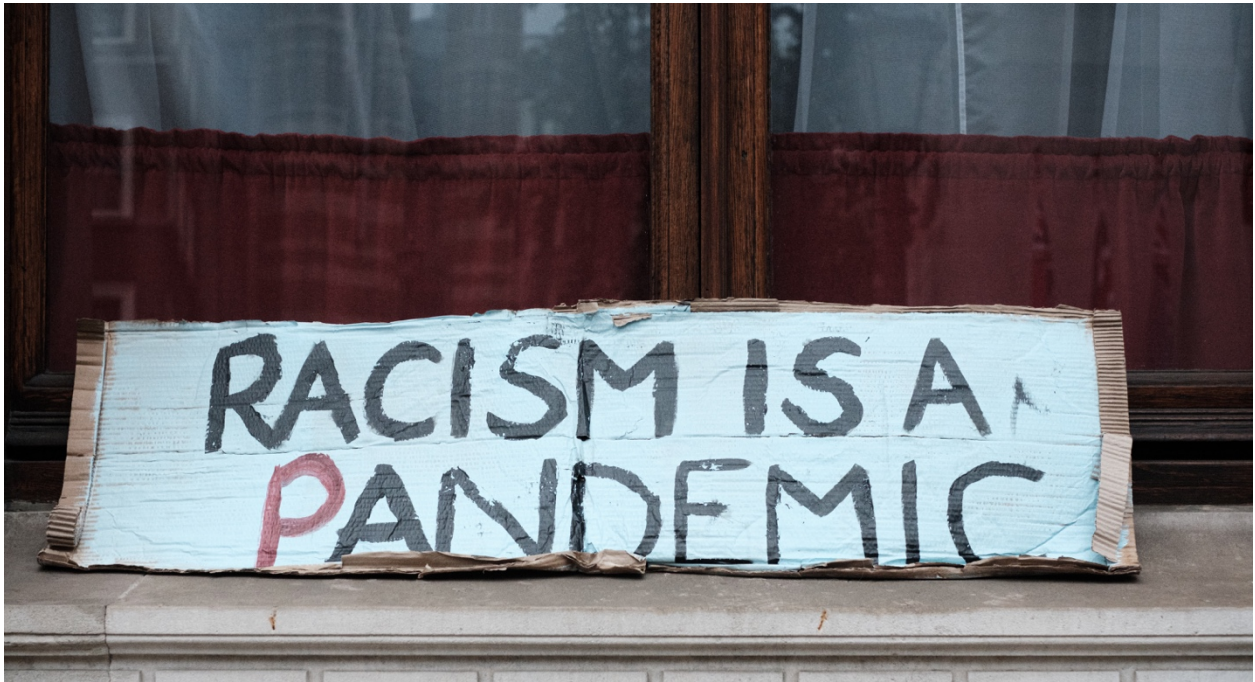
Avoid:	Preferred Language:	Why?
<p>“Born Female/Male” AND “Female-Bodied/Male-Bodied”</p>	<p>“Assigned male/female at birth”</p>	<p>The use of the phrase “assigned” grounds the assertion that gender is socially assigned at birth, rather than inherent and biological^{xvii}</p> <p>Tip: consider why this wording is necessary in one’s writing. Does the assigned sex at birth matter when discussing trans individuals?</p>
<p>“Normal and transgender”</p>	<p>“Cisgender and transgender”</p>	<p>The use of “normal” as the contrast of “transgender” enforces cisnormativity, and implies that being transgender is not normal^{xviii}</p>

<p>“Transgendered”</p>	<p>“Transgender”</p>	<p>The addition of the suffix “-ed” seems to imply that something happened to the person or that they have a condition of some kind^{xix}</p> <p>A Bit of History: the word “transgendered” was a commonly used word by trans activists, but has since been discontinued for similar reasons as stated prior^{xx}</p>
<p>“A transgender”</p>	<p>“A transgender person”</p>	<p>The word “transgender” is an adjective, not a noun</p>
<p>“Biological male/female”</p>	<p>“Cisgender male/female”</p>	<p>The use of the word “biological” rather than “cisgender” assumes that those who may not identify as cisgender are not biological. “Cisgender” is more specific and accurate</p>

“Preferred gender pronouns”	“Personal pronouns”	Using the term “preferred” suggests that their pronouns are a choice rather than a part of themselves.
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Along with the tips provided, it is important to account for the fact that every individual is different and has unique identifiers. Make sure to always refer to a person using the correct name and pronouns, when provided, as well as utilize the language preferred by the person being referred to. For example, despite the tips given and the use of the word transgender throughout this section, many trans individuals refer to themselves as “transsexual” (or any other variation) and it is important to mirror their use of language.



Race and Ethnicity

Race

“Race refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant ... [and is] a social construct that is not universal”^{xxi}

- It is important to note that race is not biological or genetic; it is a social categorization of groups of people
- **Examples:** Aboriginal, African American or Black, Asian, European American or White, Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Ethnicity

“Ethnicity refers to shared cultural characteristics such as language, ancestry, practice, and beliefs”

- **Examples:** Latinx, Irish, Arab, Vietnamese, Ghanaian, Indian, etc.

Note: Race and ethnicity are distinct and self-identifying terms that are not interchangeable, but they overlap sometimes. The distinction between the two terms is complex and varies across countries and cultures.

General Rules:

Be as specific as possible (this can reduce mislabeling). If unsure about what label to assign, it is preferred if writers identify region or nation of origin:

Examples:

- “Japanese” rather than “Asian”
- “People from Ecuador” rather than “Latinx people”

Avoid stereotyping or using generalization. For example, phrases such as “the Black race” and “the White race” are essentialist in nature, portray human groups monolithically, and often perpetuate stereotypes.^{xxii}

Using qualifying adjectives before indicating race is discouraged. It may seem as though the adjective is the exception from the norm.

- Recommendations include removing adjective or ethnoracial words if they are not important for understanding.

Example:

- “articulate Mexican professor” → “The professor offered an articulate explanation for climate change”
 - o “Mexican” is dropped because it is not necessary for understanding

General words and phrases to avoid:		
“primitive”/” savage”	Describing white settler “victories”	“Non-White”
“Ethnic”	“Exotic” (in reference to people)	“illegal alien” ^{xxiii}

Capitalization and Hyphenation:

There are conflicting rules and opinions on whether races should be capitalized. Some argue that, because race is socially constructed, it should not be capitalized.

- “Indigenous” and “Aboriginal” should be capitalized, including when you are referring to a specific group (ex. Indigenous Peoples of Canada)^{xxiv}

“Do not hyphenate a phrase when used as a noun, but use a hyphen when two or more words are used together to form an adjective:

Examples:

- “African Americans migrated to northern cities.” (noun)
- “African-American literature” (adjective)^{xxv}

Specific Ethnoracial and Cultural Groups

Black and Indigenous People of Color

BIPOC: the abbreviation for Black and Indigenous People of Color

Another example of person-first language, “a person who is not white or of European parentage”^{xxvi}

- While there are some that promote the usage of this phrase, as it brings unity to underrepresented racial groups, some also feel that it lacks specificity.^{xxvii}

“Colored people” is inappropriate given its historical usage

African American vs. Black

African American: people of African descent living in America

Black: people of African Ancestry, most often appropriate^{xxviii}

- “Blacks” (noun) is inappropriate given its historical usage
- “Afro-American” and “negro” are inappropriate^{xxix}

White vs. Caucasian

White: this term should be used in place of “Caucasian”

Caucasian: an outdated and racist term that was used to classify white people as a favorable race

Hispanic: “typically used to refer to anyone from a Spanish-speaking background”^{xxx}

- Some Hispanic people consider themselves to be white, whereas some may not.

Latino...: “the terms Latino/Latina/Latin are used mostly in the U.S. to refer to U.S. residents with ties to Latin America.”^{xxxi}

- Separate from Hispanic in instance where people do not speak Spanish (ex. Brazil)

Latinx and Latin@: gender neutral in place of Latino (masculine) and Latina (feminine)^{xxxii}

Chicano, Chicana, and Chicanx: previously a pejorative word that has been reclaimed, which refers to people of Mexican descent living in the U.S.

- Xicano, Xicana, and Xicanx: some use the “X” to acknowledge Indigenous Mexican heritage

Asian American: people of Asian ancestry living in America

- Can be specific by adding the particular nation (ex. Japanese American, Korean American, etc.)

Asian vs. Asian American

Asian: people of Asian ancestry

- Can be specific by adding the region (South, Southeast, and East Asian)^{xxxiii}

Some argue that “it is problematic to group ‘Asian’ and ‘Asian American’ as if they are synonymous. This usage reinforced the idea Asian Americans are perpetual foreigners”^{xxxiv} Therefore, it is better to refer to people of Asian ancestry living in America as Asian American rather than Asians

- “Oriental” is an inappropriate term to use

South Asian vs. Desi

South Asian: a broader term that refers to the Southern part of Asia, which has much different racial and cultural makeup than the rest of Asia^{xxxv}

Desi: most commonly refers to people of Indian, Bangladeshi, or Pakistani descent who live in the diaspora or abroad

- Similar to other word choice suggestions, it is preferred that the writer refers to the people in the manner in which they name themselves.

“In general, refer to an Indigenous group as a ‘people’ or ‘nation’ rather than as a ‘tribe’”

- It is preferred to refer to the specific nation or people that is being referred to (ex. Iroquois, Cherokee, Navajo, Seneca, etc.)^{xxxvi}

Indigenous People

Native American is often a better term to use than American Indian or Indian^{xxxvii}

- For Australia, the Indigenous People may identify as “Aboriginal People” or “Aboriginal Australians”
- For New Zealand, the Indigenous People may identify as “Maori” or the “Maori people”
- “Inuit” or “Inuk” is used instead of “Eskimo”

Phrases to be cautious of using in writing: tribe, Indian, spirit animal, Eskimo, Christopher Columbus’ “discovery” of the “New World”

Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent

Refers to those from Middle Eastern and North African regions

- Many Middle Eastern people identify as Arabs/Arab Americans

As previously discussed, it is preferred to discern specific nationalities and avoid overgeneralizations when possible or applicable

“Minority”

May be referred to as “underrepresented group” or “Black Indigenous People of Color” (BIPOC) if applicable

- When possible, avoid the term “minority” as it may imply inferiority. Oftentimes, racial and ethnic minorities are not a part of the numerical minority, but are labeled as “other” through the label of minority

Alternative: historically marginalized populations

If one is unable to avoid using this term, specify the term

- Example: “religious minority” instead of “minority”



“Standard” English vs. African American Vernacular English

“Standard” American English (SAE)*	A variety of English that is associated with formal academia <ul style="list-style-type: none">- More widely accepted in academic writing^{xxxviii}
African American Vernacular English (AAVE)	A variety of English that is most commonly used by African Americans <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Distinguished by many as its own language, separate from Standard American English- Not commonly accepted in academic writing^{xxxix}

Historical Context:

AAVE is a “sophisticated and rule-based language group” that originated in the Transatlantic Slave Trade^{xl}. AAVE has been a means “of survival, solidarity, and resistance for enslaved and the descendants of enslaved Africans spanning at least three continents”^{xli} “Language and culture are inseparable.”^{xlii} And with this, it is important to remember that AAVE is a very important part of the Black experience, Black culture, and Black identity.

AAVE has been heavily stigmatized due to the racist beliefs that it is a “lazy” version of English; however, AAVE is linguistically just as correct and proper as any other dialect of English, including SAE.^{xliii} This stigmatization is especially prevalent in academic and formal work settings. Proceeding to call SAE the “standard” displays the forced white and Eurocentric linguistic norms, “granting access to the resources to whites and denying the same resources to others”^{xliv}

*It is important to note that, linguistically, all spoken languages are equal. Therefore, while Standard American English has been deemed the most, “proper, sophisticated, and clear way to speak English.” This perpetuation of “Standard English” as the most “correct and proper” way to speak English is not based on linguistics, but it is instead based on white, Eurocentric social norms^{xlv}

AAVE in the Writing Center:

Studies have shown that Writing Center tutors are more forgiving with ESL and ELL students than with students who use AAVE in their writing.^{xlvi} Tutors and English instructors do not acknowledge AAVE as an appropriate display of knowledge, and they often stigmatize the language by believing it is objectively “wrong” or “lazy.” Across most Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), many Black students express feeling uncomfortable or unaccepted in the Writing Center because of their use of AAVE in their writing or speaking.

- Because of this, many Black clients prefer being tutored by a Black tutor who may better understand their vernacular culture.

Since Loyola University Chicago is a PWI, tutors must be cognizant of the space they are in and be knowledgeable of how to address clients who have AAVE in their writing in a respectful way. If a tutor has an appointment with a client who wrote their essay in AAVE, they should:

1. Be mindful of the space they are in and the clients’ space at a PWI.
2. Acknowledge that the writer’s work is correct, valid, and a large part of the client’s culture and history.
3. Have a conversation with the client, validating his/her/their work as an appropriate display of knowledge.
4. Discuss that their language is correct and valid, but that academia tends to prefer Standard English due to institutionalized racism within academia.



Sexual Orientation

The English language is often a heteronormative system due to the long history of discrimination against those in the LGBTQIA+ community. Despite the current American culture being generally more accepting, this history has produced terms and phrases that have negative connotations and mirror the oppressive language of the past. There are fortunately many ways to use respectful and current language regarding the LGBTQIA+ community, and it all starts with recognizing the presence of heteronormativity in society.

Heteronormativity

“Of, related to, or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality”^{xlvi}

With the knowledge that society has a tendency to utilize heterosexuality as the baseline for human sexuality, we are able to dissect how this plays out in the English language.

Heteronormative Language

“Mom and/or Dad”

- For example: “Timmy’s mom and dad live in Illinois.”
 - If it is not explicitly stated the gender of a child’s parents, it is often safer to use a generalized word such as “parent”
 - Without previous knowledge of Timmy’s parents’ genders, we could be assuming a heteronormative living situation and familial structure that can be both inaccurate and offensive. In using more generalized language, we are ensuring the inclusion of any and all family dynamics.
 - To avoid the heteronormative assumption that Timmy has a mom and dad, one can say, “Timmy’s parents live in Illinois.”

“Husband and/or Wife”

- For example: “Karen is married. Her husband has a large swimming pool.”
 - In a similar fashion, the gender of one’s spouse should not be assumed if not explicitly stated. An alternative would be to use the word “spouse” or “partner.”
 - To avoid making a mistake and imposing heteronormativity upon Karen’s relationship, one can say: “Karen is married. Her spouse has a large swimming pool.”

LGBTQIA+ Definitions^{xlvi}

When writing about sexual orientation, it is important that one considers that one's sexuality is personal to oneself. This being said, it is not always necessary to include someone's sexual orientation if it does not pertain to the content of the writing. If sexual orientation is important to one's writing, make sure that the writing is clear, accurate, and without prejudice.

To ensure that one's writing is accurate, the following table includes the meaning and correct terminology for common (but not all) identifiers within the LGBTQIA+ community:

Lesbian	“A sexual orientation that describes a woman who is primarily emotionally and sexually attracted to other woman”
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”
Bisexual	“A sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to women/females and men/males. Some people define bisexuality as attraction to all genders”
Transgender	“Describes a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not correspond based on traditional expectations ... Transgender can also include people with gender identities outside the girl/women and boy/man gender binary structure ... Sometimes abbreviated as trans” - Important to note that this is <u>NOT</u> a sexual orientation

<p>Queer</p> <p>(AND/OR)</p>	<p>“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.”</p>
<p>Questioning</p>	<p>“Describes a person who is unsure about, or is exploring their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity”</p>
<p>Intersex</p>	<p>“Describes a group of congenital conditions in which the reproductive organs, genitals, and/or sexual anatomy do not develop according to traditional expectations for females and males. Intersex can also be used as an identity term for someone with one of these conditions. The medical community sometimes uses the term ‘differences of sex development’ to describe intersex conditions; however, the term intersex is recommended by several intersex community members and groups”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important to note that this is <u>NOT</u> a sexual orientation
<p>Asexual</p>	<p>“Describes a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others. Asexual people may still engage in sexual activity.”</p>

Other Common Identifiers^{xlix}

Non-Binary	<p>“Describes a person whose gender identity falls outside of the traditional gender binary structure of girl/woman and boy/man. Sometimes abbreviated as <i>NB</i> or <i>enby</i>”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- When using abbreviated forms as stated previously, make sure that the identifiers used are mirroring the individual’s language as these abbreviations are not universally used.- Important to note that this is <u>NOT</u> a sexual orientation
Pansexual	<p>“A sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of all gender identities, or whose attractions are not related to other people’s gender”</p>



LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Language

Along with working to reduce the heteronormative bias that is often present in English, it is also important to consider word choice when it comes to sexuality. As stated previously, the LGBTQIA+ community has a history of facing discrimination. When writing about topics in regard to sexuality, this history is vital to consider. The following table will provide examples as to how to ensure that this deeply ingrained history does not accidentally make it into an assignment:

Avoid:	Preferred Language:	Why?
“LGBT”	<p>“LGBTQ”, “LGBTQ+”, “LGBTQIA”, “LGBTQIA+”</p>	<p>When using the acronym for this community, it is now considered outdated to use “LGBT” according to the APA. The use of the added letters/+ allows for a greater stretch in the direction of inclusivity.¹</p> <p>Tip: When using this acronym in formal, academic papers it can be helpful to add a note defining this acronym.</p>

<p>“Homosexual” (ex. “John is a homosexual”)</p>	<p>“Gay man, gay woman, lesbian, etc.” (“John is a gay man.”)</p>	<p>Though the term “homosexual” is technically still accurate, the use of this word has very dark and harmful connotations based on its history. Historically, this term was often used to criminalize (and psychologically diagnose) those in the LGBTQIA+ community.^{li}</p>
<p>“Sexual Preference”</p>	<p>“Sexual Orientation”</p>	<p>The use of the phrase “sexual preference” makes the assumption that one’s sexual orientation is a choice (or simply a preference).^{lii}</p>



Ability

To provide insight to the history of disability and language, it is essential to recognize that those with disabilities are the largest minority in the world. To respect their identities and experiences, it is necessary to advocate for disabled individuals and recognize that the language we use to communicate with and about them is dynamic and will continue to evolve. “A Brief History of the Disability Rights Movement” outlines that:

People with disabilities have had to battle against centuries of biased assumptions, harmful stereotypes and irrational fears. The stigmatization of disability resulted in the social and economic marginalization of generations of Americans with disabilities, and like many other oppressed minorities, left people with disabilities in a severe state of impoverishment for centuries.^{liii}

There are many generally accepted terms that may contain ableist connotations when referring to individuals with disabilities. Because of the murkiness of medical language and every changing colloquial language, it is essential to understand the underlying offensiveness of certain terms and phrases. The first and foremost goal of inclusion and disability friendly language is to respect the person or group of people one is referring to.

Person-First vs. Identity-First Language

<p>Person-First Language</p>	<p>Using person-first language places the individual first and their disability second. This works to humanize individuals rather than classify them.</p> <p><i>Example: The student with autism/the student on the autism spectrum</i></p> <p><i>Example: Emma is a student with a disability.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on the person rather than the disability <p>The downfall to this phrasing is that it lacks the option to acknowledge empowerment through disability.</p> <p><u>When to Use:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you are unsure of the individual’s preference - When referring to mental health issue
<p>Identity-First Language</p>	<p>Identity-first language includes instances where the disability determines someone’s identity. This falls under the person’s jurisdiction to portray themselves in the way they choose.</p> <p><i>Example: the autistic student/person</i></p> <p><i>Example: Emma is a disabled student</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many autistic individuals identify strongly with their diagnosis <p>The downfall to this phrasing is that it can assume a person’s connection to their disability and identity. It fails to address oppressive aspects and experiences related to having a disability and places individuals in a category that often can cause them to be victimized.</p>

****If this information is unavailable, it is best to focus on the person rather than their ability. Although this practice has been recently called into question, it is more accepting and sensitive than leading with a person’s disability or physical/mental state.**

High & Low Functioning (and why these terms are unhelpful)

People with autism or other intellectual or developmental disorders are often labeled in regard to their overall function. For example, an individual with few social skills and little mobility may be categorized as “low functioning.” To contrast, someone with a greater concept of socialization and a greater level of mobility may be given the title “high functioning.” These polarizing labels are ineffective in properly assessing a person’s conditions and place them in a category that may have adverse effects on their mental health. These labels oversimplify the strengths and weaknesses of people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities and creates an unneeded and inaccurate expectation. For example, the individual termed “low functioning” can feel that this label prevents them from succeeding in particular areas. They may feel that they have few strengths and that their weaknesses are more prominent. On the other end, people deemed higher functioning may feel conflicted if they struggle in certain areas or feel as if they don’t fit in. Both groups face difficulties when presented with these inaccurate and overarching descriptors.

- There is a call to refocus the language referring to autistic individuals to be more applicable to their needed support and accommodations rather than their (often vague) label of social function.
 - We urge students to use language that views the individuals holistically. Rather than making an overly simplified statement about function level, use terms such as “symptom severity.”

Avoiding Categorization

Oftentimes, people rely on the disability to categorize a person. This can be dehumanizing, as the person is forgotten as they are reduced to their disability. This choice generalizes the experience and symptoms of disability and ignores the possibility for spectral aspects. Additionally, mass categorizations are often used to attach negative stereotypes to individuals. Therefore, grouping individuals together into a generic group is doing them a disservice. Unless it is an established community, such as Deaf culture, avoid grouping people with the same disability together.

Avoid	Instead use
Substance abusers/addicts	“Person with addiction/substance abuse disorder”
Paraplegic/epileptic	“Person with epilepsy/person with paraplegia.”
Anorexic/bulimic	“Person with anorexia nervosa/bulimia”

Negative Connotation and Offensive Undertones

In general, avoid using terms and phrases with a negative connotation such as “struggling with/ battling/ ailed with/ cursed with.” These create negative stigmas surrounding various conditions and assume emotional connection to their disability. These terms manipulate the person’s disability and express their situation in a way that is judgmental and may not be an accurate portrayal of how the person being referenced sees their experience. For some individuals with disabilities, they find empowerment, strength, and identity in their situation so to take those powerful emotions away from them and replace them with terms that imply negative judgment is an injustice to their experience. To properly acknowledge and counteract these harmful stigmatizations, it is essential to be aware of how these misconceptions are attached to our language.

Avoid	Instead Say:	Why?
<p>“Struggling with/ ailed with/ Suffering from”</p>	<p>“Living with”</p>	<p>This implies that the disability is an obstruction. As mentioned, many see their disability as empowering and contributing to their worldview.</p>
<p>Terms such as “stroke victim” (language that victimizes the person)</p>	<p>“Diagnosed with/ experienced/ had</p>	<p>This assumes that the person falls victim to their disability, revealing that the disability is seen in a negative way, as something overpowering and more important than the individual.</p>

<p>“Confined to a wheelchair”/ constricted in any way</p>	<p>“Wheelchair user/uses a wheelchair”</p>	<p>This places a harsh judgment on wheelchair users, as their mode of transportation and movement is believed to be restrictive rather than an accommodation.</p>
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Offensive terms

Within this realm of language that carries a negative connotation, let’s take a look at some outdated and offensive terms and phrases. Following is a list of terms to avoid when referencing people with disabilities:

Avoid	Instead use	Why?
<p>“R-word”/ Any variation ending in “tard” OR “slow/lame”</p>	<p>“Intellectual or learning disability/ cognitive disability”</p>	<p>This term was often used as a derogatory term toward someone of any ability. This transference of a word previously relating to a disability was harmful as it made a judgment that the term is an insult.</p>
<p>“Brain damaged”</p>	<p>“Head injury/traumatic brain injury/ cognitive disability”</p>	<p>This term connects the presence of a disability to the term “damage” which is a harmful and ableist approach.</p>

<p>“Psycho/crazy/insane/nuts”</p>	<p>“Mental health disability/psychiatric disability”</p>	<p>These terms not only paint those with mental health problems as unstable and inferior but also as violent and irrational. These inferences should not be attached to mental health.</p>
<p>“Defective”</p>	<p>“Have a disability”</p>	<p>This term indicates that those with disabilities are in some way damaged or unable to contribute to conversations or society.</p>
<p>“Deformed”</p>	<p>Refer to specific disability</p>	<p>Though this language might be used in medical diagnoses and examinations, it should be avoided in other contexts. It applies a physical symptom to the person and casts a negative light on the person with a disability.</p>

Other General Rules

<p>Do not use terms that use disabilities as means of descriptions—hyperboles/ turn of phrases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Example: paralyzed with fear/ deaf ears/blind/lame/ unless it is necessary to prove a rhetorical point 	<p>Be sure to be cognizant of where phrases originated from (see “rule of thumb” example on pg. 11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Similarly, avoid saying “It drove me crazy”
<p>Avoid using comparisons between individuals with disabilities and individuals without disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoid words such as: “normal,” “healthy,” or “able-bodied” when referring to individuals without disabilities in comparison to those with 	<p>It is often better to use phrases such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “People without disabilities,” - “Neurotypical individuals,” - “Nondisabled people”

- Make sure that your analysis of a disabled experience is supported or sourced from a disabled person.
- A way to avoid the frequent use of people with disabilities as a way to be inspiration within Western cultures is to stress and focus on accessibility. Rather than celebrate disabled people overcoming obstacles set forth by an inaccessible society, focus on the fact that the obstacle was not the person having a disability but rather society lacking necessary resources for people with disabilities.
- In order to provide the disabled community with the proper respect, please use the appropriate terms and avoid “sugar coating.”
 - o Examples of “sugar coating” would include phrases such as: *“differently-abled, challenged, handi-capable or special”*



Mental Health

In addition to previous rhetorical guidelines regarding ability, take care to apply these suggestions when writing about mental health.

Stigmatized Language

Similar to other topics discussed throughout this handbook, mental illness and other topics related to mental health have been negatively stigmatized throughout history. There are many words and phrases that have become a part of the English language that promote these stigmas and negative connotations.

The following table provides examples of common terms or phrases in English that help continue the stigmas of mental illness and ways to both reword a sentence and reword one’s mindset regarding mental health issues^{liv}:

Avoid:	Preferred Language:	Why?
<p>“Psycho” “Crazy Person” “Schizo” “Mental Patient” “Lunatic” Etc.</p>	<p>“Living with...” OR “Diagnosed with...” Ex. “David is living with schizophrenia.” Tip: Mirror the language used by the individual if applicable</p>	<p>The phrases given and many other are clear examples of negatively connotated words oftentimes used to be derogatory or harmful towards people living with mental illness^{lv}</p>
<p>“Psychotic” “Crazy” “Deranged”</p>	<p>A person’s behavior is “unusual” or “erratic”</p>	<p>The use of the stigmatized words implies mental illness when it may not be accurate^{lvi}</p>
<p>“Committed suicide”</p>	<p>“Died by suicide” OR “Took his/her/their own life”</p>	<p>The phrase “committed” has crime connotations versus acknowledging the tragedy of suicide.</p>

<p>“Shrink” “Mental Institution” “Insane Asylum”</p>	<p>“Psychologist or psychiatrist” “Therapist” “Mental health institution”</p>	<p>When discussing mental health resources, it is important to use proper terminology. This allows for a normalization of these resources, as well as provides accurate descriptions for a reader who may wish to seek help.</p>
<p>“He is a [insert mental illness]” Ex. “He is an anorexic.”</p>	<p>“He has been diagnosed with [insert mental illness”</p>	<p>See referring to people as categorizations on pg. 35</p>



Diagnoses as Adjectives/Descriptors

It is not uncommon for people to self-diagnose or use mental health disorders to describe fleeting emotion. These misuses of mental health topics are harmful to those who are clinically diagnosed, as it effectively invalidates their experiences and rather makes the symptoms and disorders “mainstream” and thus easier to be invalidated.

General Tips:	Why?
Remember to be explicit and use phrases such as “felt depressed” rather than “was depressed” when applicable.	Being depressed is associated with a diagnosis, long term symptoms and treatment whereas feeling depressed can be used to describe a temporary emotion. This applies also with anxiousness, bipolar, dissociation etc.
Avoid describing one’s self or others as a mental disorder when one is not living with it. Such as “I’m so OCD” or “You’re being so bipolar”	Using mental disorders to describe oneself or others, no matter the intention, can further stigmatize and belittle mental illnesses and their symptoms.



Socioeconomic Status

As of 2018, 11.8% of all Americans lived under the poverty line and many individuals experience discrimination due to their socioeconomic status.^{lvii} When writing about such topics, it is important to discuss these experiences with respect and dignity. In American culture, individuals are taught to have a negative bias towards individuals experience homelessness, and the many other consequences of those who live below the poverty threshold.

Socioeconomic Status

“the social standing or class of an individual group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation”^{lviii}

Words/Phrases with Negative Connotations

As a general rule when talking about socioeconomic status, talking specifically rather than generally is preferred. For example, rather than labeling individuals as “poor,” it is preferred to say “below the federal poverty threshold” or another applicable description. Generalized terminology has often been used as a way to stereotype and demonize individuals of color throughout American society, so avoiding these terms when describing individuals will in turn avoid these harmful stereotypes. Be sure to avoid phrases such as “the projects,” “the ghetto,” and “the inner-city” when describing areas of low-income because these words hold strong ties to discrimination against those within African American and many other communities.



Other words and phrases with similar negative connotation include (but are not limited to):

Avoid:	Preferred Language:	Tips
<p> “The poor” “Low-class people” “Poor people” OR “Poverty-stricken” “Welfare reliant”^{lix} </p>	<p> “People whose incomes are below the federal poverty threshold” OR “People whose self-reported incomes were in the lowest income bracket” </p>	<p> This phrasing has often been used as “implicit descriptors” for racial and ethnic minorities.^{lx} Tip: consider including racial/ethnic descriptors in order to differentiate these categories (they are not synonymous) Rephrasing such statements also helps to ensure that SES is not placed on the individual, but rather is a position occurring to the individual. SES is not something that one can control; it is a system issue. </p>

<p>“The homeless”</p>	<p>“People experiencing homelessness” “People who are homeless” “People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, or in transition housing” “People without fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence”^{lxi}</p>	<p>Using person-first language can help to maintain the humanity of the individuals being discussed.</p>
<p>“The projects” “Ghettos”</p>	<p>“Low-income housing” “Low-income areas of the city”</p>	<p>These phrases are often used as a discriminatory manner against African American individuals, so instead of using these phrases with negative connotations, use specific language to describe the situations being discussed^{lxii}</p>

Person-First Language

Similar to other sections discussed in this handbook, when discussing socioeconomic categories and poverty, it is important to approach these topics with people-first language. This can be seen in the example “people experiencing homelessness” rather than “the homeless.” This difference in phrasing reinforces the humanity of the individual, especially when discussing a topic that has dehumanizing connotations. Examples of person-first language in the context of socioeconomic status include the following:

Avoid:	Preferred Language:	Tips:
“Welfare mothers”	“Mother who receive TANF benefits”	When discussing SES, try to be as specific in the descriptions as possible. TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (current terminology for “welfare” ^{lxiii})

Phrases Focusing on Deficit

Lastly, when discussing socioeconomic status and categories, it is important to discuss such topics in a way that avoids deficit-based phrasing. Deficit-based phrases can often blame individual for their situation “rather than recognizing a broader societal context that influences individual circumstances.” Instead of

discussing topics, such as access to education, in ways that focus on the opportunities that individuals do not presently have, one can focus on the elements of education that the individual does have. Examples of this include:

Avoid:	Preferred Language:	Tips:
<p>“High school dropouts” “Uneducated/less educated”</p>	<p>“People who have completed 10th grade”</p>	<p>It is important to not make it seem as if people are less than for having less education than what is seen as standard Tip: Focus on positive elements/what the individual has accomplished^{lxiv}</p>
<p>“Achievement Gap”</p>	<p>“Opportunity Gap”</p>	<p>Education is not a given for everyone, so phrasing this as “opportunity” is more accurate because it is not an achievement gap if not everyone has the opportunity to achieve equal education</p>



Religion

Informed Writing

Religion can be described as a religious, cultural, and ethnic descriptor for an individual or a group of individuals. When writing about religion, it is vital that these differences be acknowledged and understood in order to have healthy discussion about religion. As described in previously sections, the basic rule to follow when discussing religion is to use descriptors preferred and used by the individual or group being discussed. Using the descriptors of the individual will help to avoid assumptions about particular religious groups within one's writing.

- The main tip when writing about religion is to be aware of what one is writing about. Being able to show an awareness of the complexities of religion can increase the inclusivity in one's writing greatly.^{lxv}
 - Being aware of what one is writing can show great respect towards groups, especially considering the history of discrimination and persecutions for some religious groups. Writing in an informed manner not only benefits one's own learning but ensures representation and information for the reader.

General Tips

- Not all individuals within a religion are going to follow the same beliefs as one another. For this reason, it is important to avoid writing assumptions about a religion and avoid the use of stereotypes.
- Along similar lines, it is important to avoid overgeneralizing historical events in relation to religious groups. If explaining the history, make sure that it is as accurate as possible.
- Make sure that when discussing religious figures, be aware and use the correct titles for these figures

Oftentimes, various religious groups have their beliefs generalized, or even neutralized, by the dominance of Christianity in American culture.

- When writing, avoid writing as if Christianity is the only and main valid religion.
- Work to avoid direct religious equivalents because this can create confusion in regard to religions that already are not well understood by those who do not practice.
- A major tip when discussing religions that one does not practice is to use resources that are written by individuals of that specific religious worldview in order to get more accurate information about the religion, its background, and its practices.



Age

Ageism is best defined as discrimination against people on the basis of their age^{lxvi}. It is important to remember that ageist language can apply to both younger and older groups of people. Ageist language often includes derogatory and condescending language that people find insulting and exclusive.

Additionally, this language fails to encompass that aging is a part of every human's journey. By using more inclusive terms, writers can shift the language surrounding age from categorizing a person based on their age to describing a person in a more inclusive manner. When it comes to age, the APA style guide provides several suggestions. Firstly, they recommend writing more specifically. "Old" or "older" to one person may not be the same to another person.

Furthermore, the APA style guide does not recommend using terms such as "seniors," "elderly," "the aged," "aging dependents," and similar 'othering' terms^{lxvii}. This kind of language can stereotype the members and set them apart

from the in-group of society. An in-depth explanation of this suggestion amongst others can be found in the following table:

Avoid:	Why?	Tips to Improve:
<p>“Anti-aging” Example: “This cream is renounced for its anti-aging benefits.”</p>	<p>“This product contains vitamin C, which is known to brighten the skin and reduce wrinkles”</p>	<p>Instead of using this term, highlight other unbiased benefits of the product. The prefix “anti” insinuates that aging is something to be avoided or fought against.</p>
<p>Generational Terms (Baby Boomer, Millennial, etc.)</p>	<p>“My grandmother was born in 1953.”</p>	<p>Unless it is used in relation to a piece of literature in which these terms are directly used, the language can be considered condescending and categorical rather than descriptive.</p>

<p>“Senile”</p>	<p>“Person with dementia”</p>	<p>According to the APA style guide, “senile” is a word that has no commonly agreed upon definition. Use descriptors that accurately characterize the person’s condition/person-first language.</p>
<p>Conflict oriented words in relation to aging (“struggle,” “fight,” “battle” etc.)</p>	<p>“My grandfather has learned to ... as he grows older”</p>	<p>Conflict oriented words suggest that aging can only be a negative experience delegated to a specific group of people rather than a universal experience that everyone has. Try to use words that denote that aging is a continually process.</p>

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- ⁱⁱⁱ "What Is The Difference Between "Gender" And "Sex"?," *Dictionary.com*. 2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/e/gender-vs-sex/>. (accessed January 7, 2020).
- ^{iv} Ibid.
- ^v APA Style, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/gender> (accessed January 7, 2020).
- ^{vi} APA Style, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/grammar/singular-they> (accessed January 7, 2020).
- ^{vii} MLA Style Center, <https://style.mla.org/singular-they/> (accessed January 7, 2020).
- ^{viii} "Pronouns," APA, <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Pronouns/faq0018.html> (accessed January 7, 2020).
- ^{ix} 2017 AP Style Book
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- ^{xv} *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "transgender," accessed January 6, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transgender>.
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- ^{xviii} Ibid.
- ^{xix} https://www.glaad.org/sites/default/files/allys-guide-to-terminology_1.pdf
- ^{xx} Steinmetz, Katy. "Transgendered' v. 'Transgender': Which One Is Best to Use?" Time. Time, December 15, 2014. <https://time.com/3630965/transgender-transgendered/>.
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- ^{xxiii} Castania, Kathy. "The Evolving Language of Diversity." 2003.

^{xxiv} APA Style, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities> (accessed January 7, 2020)

^{xxv} *Ibid*,

^{xxvi} Lexico, https://www.lexico.com/definition/person_of_colour (accessed January 7, 2020).

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^{xxix} *Ibid*.

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^{xxxiii} *Ibid*.

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