



Inclusive Language Guidelines

2022 Edition



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Words matter,

and they shape our perceptions. Words can make the difference between forging trust or creating distance. Language can also be used to indicate who is included and who is not. Our language must continually evolve with our understanding and acceptance of diverse groups of people.

This booklet aims to guide us, as public media professionals, in the quest to communicate accurately and sensitively in a manner that respects all human beings and signals to people that we consider them worthy of consideration and attention.

As a vital resource for news and information, as well as educational and cultural programming, public media has an obligation to uphold the highest standard for inclusive language.

The language in this guide may not apply to every individual, therefore it is critical to take personal preferences of story subjects into account.

Language use and terminology is constantly changing. This guide does not cover every situation so please refer to the links provided to other sources to get more information. This guide will be updated regularly.

Person-first Language

Person-first language emphasizes the individual, **recognizing there is more to each person than their descriptors.**

Mention characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, racial group or ability **only when relevant.**

If one or more identities are relevant for one person in a piece, they're relevant for everyone. Avoid specifying only some people's identities so there is no presumed default of White or cisgender.

Identity-first Language

Person-first language does not necessarily apply to everyone as a default. In some communities, notably the Deaf community and among autistic people, identity-first language is strongly preferred and the disability is mentioned first (such as Deaf person).

Use the language people use for themselves. No two people are the same so make every effort to ask how people would like to be described.

Race, Ethnicity and Nationality

NOTE: Individuals should be identified by tribal affiliation. Tribe is a term used to describe the Native nations that entered into agreements with the United States government. Each of these nations is a sovereign government that oversees land, tribal citizenship and provides services.

NOTE: Native American is used within the community and is appropriate to use when referring to two or more peoples with different tribal affiliations. Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian people do not feel included in this term, and it would be most appropriate to use Native American and Alaska Native together or Native American and Native Hawaiian together to be inclusive.

NOTE: The popular use of the phrase "Spirit Animal", as in "I related to x animal," reinforces incorrect stereotypes about Native peoples and spiritual beliefs, while also being a form of cultural appropriation. Do not use.

NOTE: The word "Eskimo" is a derogatory term first used by colonizers.

NOTE: This is an outdated term and is racist toward Asian/Asian American communities.

NOTE: exotic is a word that "others" peoples, places, cultures, etc.

Race, as a social construct, generally refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant, while **ethnicity** refers to shared culture, such as language, ancestry, practices and beliefs.

Avoid broad generalizations and labels. Race and ethnicity are but one part of a person's identity. Consider carefully when deciding whether to identify people by race. Also, be sure the term minority is accurate in each circumstance, since what constitutes a racial minority varies by location.

Don't use geographic descriptors interchangeably with religious or other terms to describe specific groups of people. For example, *Muslim* is not synonymous with *Arab*.

With regards to **nationality**, avoid using *citizen* as a generic term for people who live in a given country, as it denotes legal status.

Native is a less formal term to describe the original inhabitants of the United States and can be a shorthand to include Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians.

Indigenous is a term used to represent the original inhabitants of a certain geographic location, or a term used when referring to all the original inhabitants of the world.

First Nations is a general term used to represent the Indigenous peoples in the land that is now referred to as Canada.

Instead of...

Use...

Indian, natives

American Indian, Indigenous Americans (for groups), **Indigenous, aboriginal** (for non-American), **Native** (adj.) can be used to describe styles (e.g., Native art).

NOTE: Individuals should be identified by tribal affiliation

Eskimo

Alaska Native

oriental

Asian, South Asian (India, Pakistan, etc.), **East Asian** (China, Japan, etc.), **Southeast Asian** (Indonesia, Philippines, etc.)

exotic

if of a place, **name the culture/country**;
if about a person, **see how they self-identify**.

Race, Ethnicity and Nationality

(continued)

	Instead of...	Use...
<p>NOTE: This word should never be spelled out, even when quoting someone.</p>	<p>negro, colored, "The N-word"</p>	<p>Black, African American, Black Americans, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color), people of color</p>
<p>NOTE: Please include Native Hawaiians when referencing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as in AANHPI month.</p>		<p>NOTE: African American is not necessarily interchangeable with Black American. For example, Americans of Caribbean heritage refer to themselves as Caribbean American.</p> <p>All terms and labels should be self-ascribed. People like to reference their national, immigrant identity and heritage, for example, Nigerian American, Jamaican American.</p>
	<p>Black boys Black girls</p>	<p>Black youths, Black children, Black teens</p>
	<p>Black community Brown community</p>	<p>Black communities (the plural is more inclusive) Brown communities</p>
	<p>Spanish (for people not from Spain)</p>	<p>Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine, Hispanic, Latin American, Brown</p>
		<p>NOTE: Latino/a/x and Hispanic are not interchangeable. Individuals may prefer one term over the other, ask the person and include only if relevant to the story. Always refer to "communities" not one community.</p>
	<p>Middle Eastern, Muslim (in reference to a geographic area)</p>	<p>Given the size and diversity of the Middle Eastern region, there is not an accepted encompassing racial or ethnic term. Only use Middle East when you are referring to the entire region.</p> <p>Some more accurate localized terms include: Arab (referring to an Arabic-speaking country) Persian (referring to Farsi-speakers) North African, as well as many more country and region-specific designations.</p>
	<p>WASP, hillbilly, redneck nonwhite</p>	<p>White, European American</p> <p>various heritages, different/diverse cultures</p>

Race, Ethnicity and Nationality

(continued)

	Instead of...	Use...
<p>NOTE: No human being is “illegal.” This term is used to dehumanize immigrants.</p>	alien, illegal alien	immigrant
<p>NOTE: “Racist” shouldn’t be used to describe a person, but it can be used to describe an action or statement.</p>	racist, racially charged, racially motivated, racially tinged	bigoted, biased, racially divisive, xenophobic, racially unjust
		<p>Notes on People with Multiple Identities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People born from parents of different races can be called multiracial, biracial, mixed race. • Do not use “diverse person.” A person cannot be diverse. A group of people can be diverse. Diversity only exists in relationship to other people. • If talking about Latinos and Black Americans, use both terms instead of “people of color.” Use “people of color” only when necessary in broad references to multiple races other than White.
	Blacks, Whites	Black people, White people
<p>NOTE: The word “powwow” has been used to describe meetings or gatherings in office settings. This use is incorrect and is an example of how Native cultures and traditions have been appropriated.</p>	Powwow	meeting, get-together, catch up, brainstorm
	Hold down the fort /circle the wagons	protect ourselves
	Call a spade a spade	tell it like it is
	Low man on the totem pole, Rank and file	name position, or use entry level
	America	United States or U.S. Avoid calling the U.S. America when referring to the country.
	Developing nations/ countries, Third World,	Global South low and lower-middle-income countries. Use a precise geographic location whenever possible.
<p>NOTE: This is deficit language and stigmatizes people instead of highlighting the inequities that they find themselves in.</p>	minority, underdeveloped, disadvantaged, marginalized	historically excluded, under-included, under-served
<p>NOTE: The term grandfather clause originated as a way to defy the 15th amendment and prevent Black Americans from voting. Avoid using this term.</p>	grandfather clause, grandfathered in	legacy, exempt from the rule/policy

Race, Ethnicity and Nationality

(continued)

For additional resources on how to fairly and accurately report on **race, ethnicity** and **nationality**-related issues, please see:

Asian American Journalists Association

| aaja.org

Illuminative

| [PDF](#)

National Association of Black Journalists

| nabj.org

National Association of Hispanic Journalists

| nahj.org

Native American Journalists Association

| najanewsroom.com

Race Forward

| raceforward.org

Religion Newswriters Association

| religionstylebook.com

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are complex and highly personal. As such, there are a wide variety of expressions beyond those listed, and it is important to use the correct words to describe someone. **Before using any term, make sure to refer to the definitions provided in the GLAAD Media Reference Guide available online to ensure accuracy.**

- **Sexual orientation** refers to a person's physical, emotional and/or romantic attraction to other people.
- **Gender identity** is someone's internal sense of gender, which may or may not match the sex they were assigned at birth or fit neatly into a single category.
- **Gender expression** refers to all external manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, hairstyle, behavior, voice and/or body characteristics.

! When it is necessary to refer to an individual's identity, be sure to **confirm how they self-identify and follow suit.** Do not make assumptions. Ask the individual about how to identify.

Sexual Orientation

Instead of...

Use...

homosexual (n. or adj.)
gay (n.) (as in, He is a gay.),
homo, sodomite

gay (adj.),
lesbian (n. or adj.),
bisexual, bi (adj. and should not be hyphenated),
queer (adj.)

NOTE: **Queer** has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ+ people to describe themselves; however, be aware that it is not a universally accepted term in the LGBTQ+ community.

sexual preference,
same-sex attractions,
sexual identity

sexual orientation,
orientation

normal, straight

heterosexual,
heteronormative (to describe
norms that shut out LGBTQ+ people)
people who don't identify as LGBTQ+

admitted homosexual,
avowed homosexual,
openly gay

out,
out gay man,
out lesbian,
out queer person

NOTE: Use whatever terminology the person you're speaking to uses. For example, if someone says they are "openly gay" (which some people do use), use that phrasing.

NOTE: **Ally** is a term to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people. It encompasses heterosexual and cisgender allies as well as those who are part of the LGBTQ+ communities.

For additional resources on how to fairly and accurately report on **sexual orientation**-related issues, please see:

Gender Spectrum | genderspectrum.org

GLAAD | glaad.org

The Association of LGBTQ Journalists
| nlqja.org

Society of Professional Journalists
| spj.org

The Diversity Style Guide
| diversitystyleguide.com

UMass Amherst Stonewall Center
| umass.edu/stonewall



Gender Identity and Gender Expression

People tend to use the terms “sex” and “gender” interchangeably. But, while these are connected, the two terms are not equivalent. Generally, a newborn’s sex as either male or female is assigned at birth, based on the baby’s external genitalia and internal reproductive organs. Some U.S. states and other countries offer a third option. Once a sex is assigned, it is presumed that this is the child’s gender. For some people this is cause for little, if any, concern or further thought because their gender aligns with gender-related ideas and assumptions associated with their sex. But while gender may begin with the assignment of sex, it doesn’t end there. A person’s gender is the complex interrelationship between three dimensions: body, identity and social gender.

- **Cisgender** refers to people whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth (cis—from Latin, meaning, “on this side[of]”).
- **Gender binary** A system that constructs gender according to two discrete and opposite categories: boy/man and girl/woman. It is important to recognize that both cisgender and transgender people can have a gender identity that is binary.
- **Gender dysphoria** Feeling very unhappy, uneasy or dissatisfied in relation to their gender. A tension in how someone feels about their body compared to how society genders their body, or a conflict between how someone sees themselves in contrast with expected gender roles or expectations.
- **Genderfluid** People who have a gender or genders that change. Genderfluid people move between genders, experiencing their gender as something dynamic and changing, rather than static.
- **Genderqueer** An umbrella term to describe someone who doesn’t identify with conventional gender identities, roles, expression and/or expectations. For some, genderqueer is a non-binary identification, and for others, it is not.
- **Non-binary** An umbrella term for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine.
- **Sexual orientation** Sexual orientation and gender are separate, though related, parts of our overall identity. Gender is personal (how we see ourselves) while sexual orientation is interpersonal (who we are physically, emotionally and/or romantically attracted to.)
- **Transgender** Sometimes this term is used broadly as an umbrella term to describe anyone whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex. It can also be used more narrowly as a gender identity that reflects a binary gender identity that is “opposite” or “across from” the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Identity and Gender Expression

(continued)

Instead of...	Use...
transgendered, a transgender (n.), transgenders, transvestite, tranny, she-male, he/she, it, shim	transgender (adj.), trans, trans male, trans female, (describes what they have transitioned to, not what they were assigned at birth) trans person (can describe nonbinary people who identify as trans)
transgenderism	being transgender, transness
gender identity disorder	gender dysphoria
biologically male/female, genetically male/female, born a man/woman	assigned male/female at birth, designated male/female at birth
sex change, sex reassignment, sex-change operation, pre-operative, post-operative	transition, gender affirmation surgery
hermaphrodite	intersex
normal	“Normal” is subjective. Try and understand what the intention is behind this word choice.
opposite sex	different sex
gay community	LGBTQ+ communities
special rights	equal rights, equal protection
passing, stealth, deceptive, fooling, pretending, posing, trap, masquerading	These terms should not be used because they promote the harmful idea that transgender people are being deceitful in their gender expression.

NOTE: A transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedure.

Gender Identity and Gender Expression

(continued)

Non-Binary Pronouns

For people who identify as non-binary or genderqueer (someone who does not identify as either male or female), every effort should be made to refer to them using their personal pronouns (don't assume, ask).

See below for some examples of non-binary-gendered personal pronoun sets; if it's not possible to confirm which the individual prefers, the singular *they* can be used as a default. It is never appropriate to put quotation marks around someone's name or personal pronouns.

If it is appropriate/relevant to use an honorific, **Mx.** or **Ind.** can be used as non-gendered alternatives to **Mr.**, **Mrs.** and **Ms.**

NOTE: Pronouns designations are fluid so you should always ask someone "what are your pronouns?" even if they already self-identified in the past, as their pronouns might have changed.

Instead of...	Use...		
he/she	they	zie/ze	sie
him/her	them	zim	sie
his/her	their	zir	hir
his/hers	theirs	zis	hirs
himself/herself	themselves	zieself	hirsself

NOTE: **Zie/Ze** is typically pronounced with a long "e."
Hir and its forms are usually pronounced like "here."

This is not an exhaustive list of non-binary pronouns.

NOTE: There are some people who use multiple pronouns, including binary ones. They may want you to use one or all of those pronouns when you refer to them in conversation or in writing. If in doubt, don't assume, ask the person. Be careful not to pressure them to go into any detail about their gender identity beyond what they are comfortable with, or what is relevant.

NOTE: The phrase "preferred name" can be used when people use their middle name instead of their first name. But in most instances, best to ask, "What is your name?"

What are your preferred pronouns?

What are your pronouns?

What is your preferred name?

What is your name?

NOTE: Use gender-neutral language when talking about or referencing groups. Do not assume the gender of all people involved. Use *they/their* instead of *he/his* or *she/her*.



Gender Identity and Gender Expression

(continued)

For additional resources on how to fairly and accurately report on **gender**-related issues, please see:

Gender Spectrum | genderspectrum.org

GLAAD | glaad.org

The Association of LGBTQ Journalists | nlqja.org

Society of Professional Journalists | spj.org

The Diversity Style Guide | diversitystyleguide.com

Human Rights Campaign | hrc.org/resources

UMass Amherst Stonewall Center
| umass.edu/stonewall

Gender Inclusivity

Gender-specific language can exclude people or perpetuate stereotypes. Here are some basic tips to make your language more inclusive and respectful to everyone.

- Consider whether gender is relevant/necessary for communication – can non-gendered synonyms or alternative pronouns be used without losing meaning (e.g., children instead of boys and girls)?
- There should be consistency when referring to all individuals. If one person is addressed by first or last name only, courtesy title or profession, all should be addressed that way.
- Try restructuring your sentence to omit a gendered pronoun entirely – often it can be removed without affecting clarity (e.g., A person must live here for 20 years before he may apply for permanent residence. vs. A person must live here for 20 years before applying for permanent residence.)
- Consider descriptors – while not inherently gendered, adjectives like feisty, bossy, sassy, bubbly, petite and frumpy are often used only to describe women and can carry a negative or demeaning connotation. Avoid using these.

Instead of...	Use...
man, woman	person, individual
guys (<i>when referring to a group of people</i>)	everyone, folks
mankind	people, human beings, humanity
freshman	first-year student
man-made	machine-made, synthetic, artificial
the common man	the average person, folks
chairman	chair, chairperson, coordinator, head
mailman	mail carrier, letter carrier, postal worker
policeman	police officer
steward, stewardess	flight attendant
actor, actress	actor
congressman	legislator, congressional representative
husband, wife	partner, spouse
ladies and gentlemen	everyone

Gender Inclusivity

(continued)

Instead of...	Use...
brother, sister	sibling
he, she	they, their, one, who, we, use names/nouns
his, hers	the, a, an
unisex	gender-inclusive (adj.), all-gender

NOTE: Using gender-inclusive language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.

NOTE: Unisex is still sometimes used, but these are preferred

For additional resources on how to fairly and accurately report on **gender inclusivity**-related issues, please see:

Gender Spectrum
| genderspectrum.org

GLAAD
| glaad.org

Human Rights Campaign
| www.hrc.org

The Association of LGBTQ Journalists
| nlqja.org

Society of Professional Journalists
| spj.org

The Diversity Style Guide
| diversitystyleguide.com

UMass Amherst Stonewall Center
| umass.edu/stonewall

Disability

This guide uses the term *disability*, even though the term itself is not universally accepted. Disabilities can affect people in myriad ways and may be invisible. As with communications about other characteristics of people, the best guidance is to ask individuals how they would like to be described. Choose language that emphasizes what people can do, rather than what they can't (e.g., *person who uses a wheelchair* instead of *wheelchair-bound*).

General guidelines include the following:

- Listen to the language people with disabilities use about themselves.
- Do not assume that people with disabilities are willing to disclose that information.
- Mention a disability only when relevant to the topic at hand.
- Refer to a disability only when a trustworthy diagnosis has been made.
- Avoid made-up words such as *diffability*.
- Asking for any "documentation" is never okay.
- Avoid the term "special needs."
- Be sensitive when using words like disorder, impairment, abnormality and special to describe the nature of a disability. In general, the word "condition" is often a good substitute that avoids judgment.

NOTE: Be cautious when using the word abnormal or abnormality to describe a person as it implies that people with disabilities are deviant or strange.

Instead of...	Use...
the handicapped, the disabled, the differently-abled	people with disabilities
normal, healthy, whole people, temporarily able-bodied, currently able-bodied	people without disabilities, neurotypical (when referring to cognitive ability)
disabled community, disabled sport	disability communities, sport for athletes with a disability
person with a birth defect	person who has a congenital anomaly
person afflicted with, suffers from, is stricken with, a victim of..	person who has..., person who has been diagnosed with...
Downs person, mongoloid, mongol	person who has Down syndrome
the autistic	autistic (as an adjective - as in " an autistic person "), person with autism or person who has autism, person who has (or has been diagnosed with) autism, person on the autism spectrum, on the spectrum
a quadriplegic, a paraplegic	person with quadriplegia, person with paraplegia, person diagnosed with a physical disability
a cripple	person with a physical disability, person with a mobility impairment, person who walks with crutches, person who uses a walker

Disability

(continued)

Instead of...	Use...
a dwarf, a midget	person of short stature, little person
dumb, mute, nonverbal	person who is unable to speak, person who uses a communication device, person who communicates without using words
hearing impaired, the deaf	person who is deaf (little to no functional hearing, often communicates through sign language), person who is hard of hearing (mild to moderate hearing loss, may or may not use sign language)
<hr/> NOTE: "Deaf" vs. "deaf" capital "D" typically refers to the culture (e.g., the Deaf community) lowercase "d" generally refers to audiological status	
<hr/> NOTE: Identity-first language is strongly preferred in the Deaf community (e.g., Deaf person) but ask the person how they would like to be described.	
the blind	people who are blind, people who are visually impaired, people who have low vision
attack, spell, fit	seizure
learning disabled	person with a learning disability
brain damaged	person with a brain injury, person who has sustained a brain injury
crazy, insane, psycho, mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, demented, nuts, deranged	person diagnosed with a mental health condition, person with a psychiatric disability

NOTE: In general, avoid using crazy, insane, nuts or psycho to describe any person or thing. Use outrageous, wild or ludicrous instead.

Disability

(continued)

	Instead of...	Use...
<p>NOTE: “Mentally retarded” is an outdated and deeply offensive term. Do not use it.</p> <p>President Obama signed Rosa’s Law in 2010 (S. 2781) to remove the term from federal documents and replace it with intellectual disability.</p>	mentally retarded, retarded, slow, idiot, moron, simple	person with an intellectual/developmental disability
<p>NOTE: Avoid using 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. It is more accurate to cite the specific disability or disabilities.</p>	special ed student, special education student	student who receives services to address functional needs
	confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound	person who uses a wheelchair or a mobility chair
	handicapped parking, handicapped bathrooms, etc.	accessible parking, accessible bathrooms, etc.
	special, courageous, heroic, inspiring, brave	People who adapt to their disability do not necessarily acquire these traits – <i>consider whether the individual or situation merits these terms beyond disability</i>
	turn a blind eye	deliberately ignore

For additional resources on how to fairly and accurately report on **disability**-related issues, please see:

National Center on Disability and Journalism
| ncdj.org

Society of Professional Journalists
| spj.org

The Diversity Style Guide
| diversitystyleguide.com

Age and Family Status

Families come in many forms, either by design or circumstances. As society comes to have a broader understanding of families, it is important to choose language that avoids stereotypes and pejorative words. Also, it is important not to imply that being married or marriage is the norm and/or expectation.

Similarly, it is important to avoid stereotyping and discrimination on the basis of age, whether old or young. Avoid mentioning age unless it is relevant to the issue at hand, and be sensitive about language concerning physical ability, health and work capability as people grow older. Furthermore, it is important to avoid implying that people within a certain age, class or family structure are all alike.

Instead of...	Use...
senior, older person, older adult, older people, experienced, seasoned, mature, teenager, young person	<p>“Older person” and “younger person” are subjective, and folks who are “older” are not necessarily experienced, seasoned or mature.</p> <p>When talking about a specific person, if age is relevant, simply state the person’s age. And when talking about a collective group, use the term that the subject of the story is using.</p>
man, woman	person
husband, wife	spouse, partner
boy, girl	<p>For children ages 0–12: kiddo, child For ages 12–18: adolescent, teen, young adult For over 18: adult</p>
<p>NOTE: Avoid using gender binary unless known how the person identifies and use specific age if relevant.</p>	
real mother/father/parent	birth parent, biological parent, guardian
<p>NOTE: Instead of mother/father, use gender neutral language. Do not assume that all children live with two adults.</p>	
give/given up for adoption	placed for adoption, birth parent chose adoption
is adopted	was adopted
adoptee	person/individual who was adopted
adoptive parent	parent

Age and Family Status

(continued)

Instead of...	Use...
poor, blue-collar	lower-income
homeless/the homeless	people experiencing homelessness, people without homes, people without housing
spinster, old maid, maiden (as in, my maiden aunt)	person who is single
divorcée, divorcé	person who is single (preferred), person who is divorced

NOTE: Use self-ascribed relationship identity terms and respectfully check-in with the individual about how they would like their relationship status identified. Unmarried and divorced are past statuses and imply that married is the norm. When in doubt, **person who is single** is preferred. It is best to avoid marital status altogether, unless legal marital relationships are the subject of the writing, especially if the subjects are LGBTQ+ people.

NOTE: Use pregnant people, people/patients who seek an abortion, people who menstruate when referring to experiences of people who are not women. Some trans men and nonbinary people can become pregnant and give birth or get an abortion.

pro-choice	abortion-rights supporter
pro-abortion	abortion-rights advocate
abortionist	abortion-provider

For additional resources on how to fairly and accurately report on **age** or **family status**-related issues, please see:

AARP

| aarp.org

National Council for Adoption

| adoptioncouncil.org

Society of Professional Journalists

| spj.org

The Diversity Style Guide

| diversitystyleguide.com

Substance Use

Addiction is a disease manifested by cravings and compulsive substance use, in spite of negative consequences. Research shows that the language we use to describe this disease can either perpetuate or mitigate the stereotypes, prejudice and lack of empathy that keeps people from getting treatment they need.

Instead of...	Use...
addict	person with a substance use disorder
addicted to ___	has an ___ use disorder, has a serious ___ use disorder, has a substance use disorder involving ___, is struggling with ___ addiction
alcoholic	person with an alcohol use disorder, person with a substance use disorder involving alcohol, person with alcohol addiction
clean	abstinent
clean screen	negative screen, substance-free, testing negative for substance use
dirty	actively using, positive for substance use
dirty screen	positive screen, testing positive for substance use
drug abuse, substance abuse, drug habit	substance use disorder, compulsive or regular substance use
drug abuser, substance abuser	person with a substance use disorder, person who uses drugs (if not diagnosed as a disorder), person struggling with addiction
former/reformed addict, former/reformed alcoholic	person in recovery, person in long-term recovery
opioid replacement, methadone maintenance	treatment, treatment involving medication use, medication-assisted treatment

Substance Use

(continued)

Instead of...

Use...

recreational/casual/
experimental users

**people who use drugs for non-medical reasons,
people starting to use drugs,
people who are new to drug use, initiates**

Alcoholics Anonymous,
Narcotics Anonymous, etc.

When using these terms, take care to
**avoid divulging an individual's participation
in a named 12-step program.**

For additional resources
on how to fairly and
accurately report on
substance use-related
issues, please see:

Society of Professional Journalists

| spj.org

American Society of Addiction Medicine

| asam.org

Veteran and Military Status

As a general rule, it is more inclusive to spell out all acronyms so that the uninitiated can understand them.

In general, always ask members of the military and veterans how they want to be identified. Some may not want to reveal their military or veteran status.

Military ranks are generally gender neutral with these exceptions:

Instead of...	Use...
airmen	pilots, air force personnel, air corps
guardsmen	guard
serviceman	serviceperson, member of the armed forces, soldier, sailor
seaman	sailor
amputee	someone with an amputation

NOTE: Soldier is generally not gender specific but if the gender of the person needs to be specified, then write service woman (not female soldier, woman soldier, etc.). Ask the soldier to confirm how they want to be identified.

For additional resources on how to fairly and accurately report on **veteran or military**-related issues, please see:

NATO Gender-Inclusive Language Manual
| nato.int

Further Resources

AARP | aarp.org

American Society of Addiction Medicine | asam.org

Asian American Journalists Association | aaja.org

Associated Press Stylebook | apstylebook.com

Conscious Style Guide | consciousstyleguide.com

Gender Spectrum | genderspectrum.org

GLAAD | glaad.org

Human Rights Campaign | hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms

Illuminative | illuminative.org

Korn Ferry | kornferry.com

National Association of Black Journalists | nabj.org

National Association of Hispanic Journalists | nahj.org

National Center on Disability and Journalism | ncdj.org

National Council for Adoption | adoptioncouncil.org

Native American Journalists Association | najanewsroom.com

NATO Gender-Inclusive Language Manual | nato.int

The Association of LGBTQ Journalists | nlgja.org

Race Forward | raceforward.org

Religion Newswriters Association | religionstylebook.com

Society of Professional Journalists | sjp.org

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