

**Western University
Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion**

Inclusive Language Guide

The Office of EDI would like to recognize the work and time that many internal and external reviewers put into revising the Inclusive Language Guide. To all reviewers, we thank you for your dedication to inclusivity and for participating in the creation of this educational resource to make Western a place where students, staff, and faculty can feel welcome.

Land Acknowledgement

The Great Lakes region of Turtle Island is the ancestral lands of the Anishinabek, Haudenosaunee and Lunaapéewak Nations. Western University is located in Baketigweyaang (At the Side-Flow), or what is now known as London, Ontario, alongside Deshkan Ziiibiing (Antler River). This sacred life force flows through the heart of Southwestern Ontario, connecting our communities across the region. Western University accepts responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation, as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples through our teaching, research and community service.

It is imperative to acknowledge that as part of the official systemic efforts to assimilate Indigenous Peoples in Canada, such as in Residential Schools, Indigenous children were prohibited from speaking their native languages and faced punishment if they did. However, language serves as a cultural tool for conveying values, beliefs, and fostering relationships. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that English, being a colonial language utilized throughout this guide for writing, descriptions, language, and recommendations, was imposed upon Indigenous lands and communities through colonial power structures. This historical reality continues to shape the dynamics between settlers and Indigenous peoples. The most respectful approach towards Indigenous Peoples involves learning the terms they use to identify themselves and demonstrating respect for their self-determination.

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Table of Contents

<i>Land Acknowledgement</i>	1
<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Defining Inclusive Language at Western</i>	5
<i>Guiding Principles in Inclusive Language</i>	5
<i>Inclusive Language Related to Disabilities</i>	9
<i>Terms Related to Ageism</i>	15
<i>Terms Related to Race, Ethnicity, and Culture</i>	19
<i>Terms Related to Indigenous Peoples</i>	27
<i>Terms Related to Gender Identity and Sexuality</i>	30
Gendered Pronouns	39
Traditional Pronouns Table	42
Nonbinary Pronouns Table	42
<i>Terms Related to Socioeconomic Status</i>	44
<i>Terms Related to Marital and Family Status</i>	45
<i>References</i>	47

Introduction

The [Western Strategic Plan: Towards Western at 150](#) prioritizes the creation of a more equitable and inclusive campus and to thrive through belonging. The Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion at Western is committed to creating resources that guide our community in building inclusive spaces where people are recognized, respected, and validated. We hope that this Inclusive Language Guide helps build an understanding of the ways language can be used to welcome and acknowledge the diverse peoples across campus, at the affiliated colleges, and in society.

At Western University, the primary language used is English due to the colonial history of the establishment of the City of London. Language reflects social constructs, relationships, and powers. Languages are fluid, changing as time and societies shift. The etymology and historical background of words used in the English language, the reasons behind their creation and use, and the impact these have on people, are all factors that contribute to the fluidity and changes in the use of the English language. Creating inclusive spaces by using the current and most appropriate terminology is essential to conveying the message that we practice allyship, and respectful cross-cultural interactions. On the contrary, using words that are not inclusive can be offensive and leave individuals feeling invalidated, and unwelcomed. It could also damage their sense of belonging, and cause trauma or harm, making the campus an alienating place.

Language is not just words. It portrays a vision of the world, and the words, whether spoken or written, can touch people's lives in positive ways, but they can also be harmful. The purpose of this guide is to:

1. Provide some key principles and recommendations to encourage the use of inclusive language in our personal and professional lives;
2. Explain how and why certain language related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization has changed over time; and
3. Provide examples of language that is presently derogatory and substituting them for language that convey respect and validation for diversity.

This guide does not provide an exhaustive list of the language that has historically harmed equity-deserving group members, nor a prescriptive manual of words that should or should not

be used. It provides recommendations about the use of words and phrases that do not deliberately exclude or harm equity-deserving group members. This guide invites the Western community to reflect on the language used in class, at work, with friends and family, and why you are willing to use or avoid them. The Inclusive Language Guide is a living document that will be updated whenever necessary to reflect and honour the language changes surrounding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Decolonization, and Indigenization.

Defining Inclusive Language at Western

Inclusive language respects and acknowledges diverse identities. Using inclusive language involves avoiding terms that perpetuate erasure or exclude people based on prejudices, biases, and stereotypes, while proactively using words that are welcoming and advocate for a more inclusive society. Inclusive language puts people first and contributes to an environment where people can bring their whole selves to university.

Guiding Principles in Inclusive Language

Some general principles of using inclusive language are presented in the table below.

Table 1 Guiding Principles in Inclusive Language

Principle	Description	Application Examples
People first.	Since language communicates people's thoughts and world views, it is helpful to focus on people as individuals who are part of a diverse society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use language that demonstrates respect towards individuality. • Use the language people use to describe themselves or call them the way they prefer to be called. Note: some people use words that were used in the past to oppress the group they belong to as a sign of empowerment. For example, some people refer to themselves as "queer," a word used as a slur in the past. Even though someone might use this word to describe themselves, they might not see it as appropriate for people to refer to them in the same way.

Principle	Description	Application Examples
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When in doubt, please ask individuals about their preferences.
Words matter.	Your choice of words influences the people listening, and those words and phrases can either harm or include them. Words have the power to stereotype and discriminate or, on the contrary, show that we care and value differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid using adjectives as nouns to refer to groups of people, or labels based on a condition. For example, “the Blacks,” “the gays.” • Instead, use the adjectives or nouns with descriptive phrases. For example, “Black people,” “gay individuals,” “people with ADHD.” • When in doubt, please ask individuals about their preferences.
Keep an open mindset to changes in language.	It is crucial to keep an open and empathetic mindset. Language related to diversity and inclusion has changed over time. Learning how those terms have changed and choosing the words that are considered appropriate in the current time shows commitment to building inclusive spaces and respect for the reasons why those changes were made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be curious about how language has changed. Search for resources, such as this guide, to learn more about how language related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization has evolved. • Be proactive and use a more inclusive language on purpose. • Find opportunities to share what you have learned about inclusive language with your friends, family, and colleagues.
Be aware of stereotypes and microaggressions.	A stereotype is a conventional, intuitive, and oversimplified opinion, idea,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be cautious about making sweeping statements or assumptions about any social group.

Principle	Description	Application Examples
	<p>or belief about a person’s community or identity.</p> <p>Stereotypes can perpetuate erroneous and hurtful opinions of people and communities. There is language that has been historically used to oppress and perpetuate discrimination and stereotypes of equity-deserving groups.</p> <p>Microaggressions are “the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual orientations, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue, 2010, p. 229).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is crucial to be curious and keep learning about words, phrases, and perspectives that might offend people and cause harm, or that might be microaggressions towards equity-deserving groups. • Inclusive language helps prevent microaggressions.
Engage in self-reflection.	Reflect on why you use certain words or phrases, their origins, and if there are more inclusive options that you can use.	Many words and phrases are said or written without analyzing where they come from and what their impact is on individuals. Take time to reflect on why those words or phrases are common and how they can harm people around us.

(Adapted from British Columbia Public Service Agency, 2018; American Psychological Association, 2022).

Content Warning: The content that will be presented in this guide might make you feel uncomfortable and could trigger difficult emotions. This guide presents a list of some outdated words and more appropriate substitutes. Keep in mind that these words will keep evolving and that it is important to unlearn and learn as the inclusive language changes.

The following resources are available to you at Western.

For students: Mental Health Support Resources. All appointments need to be booked in advance by calling **519-661-3030**.

For Indigenous students: For student support, please visit the Indigenous Student Centre on the second floor of the Western Student Services Building, room 2100.

For Faculty and Staff members: Mental Health Resources for Faculty and Staff members can be found on the Human Resources Mental Health website.

Inclusive Language Related to Disabilities

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC, 2016) states that a disability “is a complex, evolving matter. The term ‘disability’ covers a broad range and degree of conditions. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, developed over time”, or go undetected (para. 1).

Disabilities can be **visible or non-visible**. **Visible disabilities** can be noticed by just looking at the person. For example, involuntary shaking or paralysis. **Non-visible disabilities** are not immediately noticeable, and it may affect the way people speak, hear, or think, and they are commonly misunderstood and overlooked. Some examples of non-visible disabilities are brain injuries, mental health conditions, chronic pain, hearing, and vision impairments, among others.

The Code (section 10) defines ‘disability’ as:

1. “any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
4. a mental disorder; or
5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.”

[\(OHRC, 2016, para. 1\)](#)

The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the United Nations (UN, 2006) explains that “disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” ([Preamble, para. 5](#)).

Terminology about disabilities can vary. People are encouraged to use terms and descriptions that honour and explain *person-first and identity-first perspectives*. Language should be selected with the understanding that the individual’s preference supersedes matters of style.

Person-first language emphasizes the person before the disability or condition. It keeps the individuals as the most essential element in the language we use, instead of considering that a specific condition is what defines the person. For example, ‘a man who is blind,’ ‘a person who has a traumatic brain injury.’ Use of this proactive language will reinforce that people with disabilities are treated with the same respect as individuals who do not have disabilities. However, this language does not work for some people because their disability is an integral part of who they are, in which case they prefer identity-first language.

Identity-first language focuses on the disability, and it is up to people to choose which language they prefer. Identity-first language “is often used as an expression of cultural pride and a reclamation of a disability or chronic condition that once conferred a negative identity” ([APA, 2020b, para. 5](#)). Some examples are ‘an epileptic person,’ ‘a blind person,’ or ‘a deaf person.’

Table 2 Person first language versus Identity-first language

Person-first Language	Identity-first Language
A person with a disability	A disabled person
A person who is deaf	A deaf person
A person who is blind	A blind person

Both approaches are acceptable, so it is essential to learn or ask which is the preferred approach of a specific group or a person. When in doubt, ask individuals about their preferences.

Terms Related to Disability Status

Table 3 Terms related to disability status

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special needs • physically challenged • mentally challenged • developmentally delayed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with a disability • person who has a disability • disabled person • people with intellectual disabilities • child with a congenital disability • child with a birth impairment • physically disabled person • person with a physical disability 	<p>Use person-first or identity-first language as is appropriate for the person being discussed. Avoid terms that are condescending, patronizing, and disrespectful.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with autism • person living with autism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autistic person • autistic individuals 	<p>The “Autistic person uses identity first language, which reflect the belief that being Autistic is a core part of a person’s identity. This is the preferred form of identification by a significant representation of Autistic Canadians. However, it is also important to keep in mind that “there are others who prefer ‘person-first’ references” (CASDA/ACTSA Language Guide, 2020). Please use those when so told.</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mentally ill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with a mental disorder • person with a mental illness • person living with a mental health condition 	<p>The recommended substitutes use the person-first principle, where the individual is not defined by the condition they have. Their identity as a person comes first.</p> <p>When we say “person with a mental disorder” we are emphasizing they are not defined solely by their disability. It is a way to separate their identity from their disability.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with deafness • person who is deaf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf person 	<p>Most Deaf or Deaf-Blind individuals culturally prefer to be called Deaf or Deaf-Blind (capitalized) rather than ‘hearing-impaired,’ ‘people with hearing loss’ and so forth.</p> <p>Some Deaf people do not see themselves as disabled, but as speakers of a different language.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hearing-impaired person • person who is hearing impaired • person with hearing loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hard-of-hearing person • person who is hard-of-hearing 	<p>The word ‘impaired’ is an adjective defined as ‘being in an imperfect or weakened state or condition;’ ‘unable to function normally or safely’ (Merriam-Webster)</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
		<p>Dictionary, n.d.). For this reason, using the term ‘hearing impaired’ has a negative connotation. Many people who are deaf think about it as part of their identity, not as an impediment or an impairment.</p> <p>When in doubt, please ask the person what their preference is.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with blindness • visually challenged person • sight-challenged person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blind person • person who is blind • visually impaired person • vision-impaired person • person who is visually impaired 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wheelchair-bound person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wheelchair user • person in a wheelchair 	<p>Avoid language that uses pictorial metaphors, negativistic terms that imply restriction, and slurs that insult or disparage a particular group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIDS victim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person living with AIDS 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brain damaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with a traumatic brain injury 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cripple • invalid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person living with a physical disability 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with a mental illness 	

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nuts • crazy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with a history of mental health challenge(s) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alcoholic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with alcohol use disorder 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drug addict • drug abuser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person experiencing a substance use dependence 	

Additional Resources:

- Canadian Memorial Chiropractor College. (n.d.). *Guidelines for inclusive language*. <https://www.cmcc.ca/about-cmcc/documents/public-policies/guidelines-for-inclusive-language.pdf>
- Government of Canada. (2022, July 29). *Inclusive language considerations*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada-regulations-guidance/consultation/inclusive-language.html>
- Humber College. (2017). *Inclusive language in media: A Canadian style guide*. [https://www.humber.ca/makingaccessiblemedia/modules/01/transript/Inclusive Language Guide Aug2019.pdf](https://www.humber.ca/makingaccessiblemedia/modules/01/transript/Inclusive_Language_Guide_Aug2019.pdf)
- Rick Hansen Foundation. (2021, December 3). *The power of inclusive language* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/FTnrxJZINj4>
- United Nations. (2022). *Disability-inclusive communications guidelines*. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_disability-inclusive_communication_guidelines.pdf
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Disability Inclusive Language Guidelines*. <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/disability-inclusive-language>

Terms Related to Ageism

Ageism is defined by the [World Health Organization \(WHO, 2021\)](#) as the “stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel), and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age” (“What is agism?” section, para. 1).

The OHRC (n.d.) defines ageism as “a socially constructed way of thinking about older persons based on negative attitudes and stereotypes about aging and a tendency to structure society based on an assumption that everyone is young, thereby failing to respond appropriately to the real needs of older persons.”

Ageism can cause harm to older adults, especially when younger individuals use patronizing speech based on the presumed limitations of older adults to address them. Similarly, older adults can cause harm when they disregard/under acknowledge or value the impact of younger adults, for example. This type of speech decreases people’s performance when receiving instructions and increases their stress levels (Hehman & Bugental, 2015). “Ageism can change how we view ourselves, can erode solidarity between generations, can devalue or limit our ability to benefit from what younger and older populations can contribute, and can impact our health, longevity and well-being while also having far-reaching economic consequences” ([WHO, 2021, “Is agism really a problem?” section](#)).

Sometimes people underestimate the positive effect that intergenerational relationships might bring individuals. Intergenerational interactions are beneficial to both older and younger people, as demonstrated by many thriving Indigenous societies who organize their societies in this manner. Research shows that these interactions benefit older people by enhancing their well-being, improving communications skills, and sense of purpose, among others. Younger people also benefit from intergenerational interactions as they develop new communication skills, a sense of purpose, identity synthesis, subjective well-being, positive mood, self-esteem, positive attitudes toward older people, and friendships (Blais et al., 2017; Kahlbaugh & Budnick, 2021; Pillemer et al., 2022).

In higher education ageism has a systemic dimension, meaning that university policies, structures, services, and educational programs sometimes do not consider the embedded barriers that older adults might face. Ageism also has an individual dimension, where the everyday interactions and the language people use reflect their assumptions and biases towards older adults. Language is a repository of culture that can embody stereotypes and discrimination, which may cause potential harm to targets, so it is necessary to learn the proper language to prevent ageism, show respect, and create an inclusive environment.

Table 4 Terms related to ageism

Poor Example	Better Example	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the elderly • elderly people • aged • aging dependents • seniors • senior citizens • old people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • older adults • older individuals • persons 55 or 65 years and older (aim for specificity. In some Indigenous societies, age 55 is the age when one is considered aged). • the older population 	<p>Many of the words presented in the “Instead of” column are diminishing generalization. Not all older adults have the same capacities and identities. It is important to be as specific as possible when speaking or writing about age and ask yourself “is it relevant to mention their age in this context?”; “do I need to use adjectives such as “cute” in this scenario?”</p> <p>In Indigenous societies age 55 and older is considered aged.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • senile woman/women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • older woman/women with a disability 	<p>The word “senile” is defined as “relating to, exhibiting, or</p>

Poor Example	Better Example	Why?
		characteristic of old age;” “exhibiting a loss of cognitive abilities (such as memory) associated with old age.” To avoid ageism, it is recommended to avoid the word “senile” for it has a negative connotation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjectives such as sweet, cute, adorable, senile, frail, vulnerable, feeble, incapacitated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to the person by their name. Use adequate adjectives that describe the individual: thoughtful, amicable, caring. 	Adults should be treated as such. Using adjectives such as “cute” or “adorable” can sound condescending and might make older adults feel belittled.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressions such as “You can’t teach old dogs new tricks.” 		Expressions such as this one can perpetuate stereotypes and send the message that older adults are less cognitively or physically capable than others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kid(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> student(s) client(s) student’s name (e.g., Charlie, Carla) 	Using the word “kid(s)” to refer to a student or a group of students in higher education could be patronising and demeaning. The word “kid” has a range of

Poor Example	Better Example	Why?
		meanings, including “child” or “children,” and it could also be interpreted as inexperienced or immature. Using “student” or “client” removes the assumption you know about their age or stage in life compared to you; signals the need for processes and policies that are inclusive to wider life experiences.

(Sources: APA 2020b; National Ageing Research Institute, 2022; Van Vleck, 2022).

Additional Resources:

- Canadian Cultural Mosaic Foundation. (2018). *Language decoded. Canadian inclusive language glossary*. <https://acaging.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Language-Decoded.pdf>
- Changing the Narrative. Ending Ageism Together. (n.d.). *Style guidelines for avoiding ageist language*. Retrieved September 5, 2022, from <https://cnpea.ca/images/guidelines-for-age-inclusive-communication.pdf>
- Government of Canada. (2022, August). *Discussion guide on ageism in Canada*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum/consultation-ageism/discussion-guide.html>
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). *Ageism and age discrimination (fact sheet)*. Retrieved September 5, 2022, from <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ageism-and-age-discrimination-fact-sheet>

Terms Related to Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Before learning about inclusive language related to race, ethnicity, and culture, it is important to understand what these three words mean.

Race is a “term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits (phenotypes) such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has created (i.e., “socially constructed”), with significant consequences for people’s lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural or religious groupings” ([Government of Ontario, 2022](#)).

Ethnicity refers to “groups of people who share cultural traits that they characterize as different from those of other groups. An ethnic group is often understood as sharing a common origin, language, ancestry, spirituality, history, values, traditions and culture. People of the same race can be of different ethnicities” ([Vice-President Finance and Operations Portfolio, University of British Columbia, n.d.](#)).

Culture is “the shared, often unspoken, understandings in a group that shape identities and the process of making meaning.... it is a series of lenses that shape what we see and don’t see, how we perceive and interpret, and where we draw boundaries” (Lebaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 14).

Words are powerful, and the language related to race and ethnicity when not used adequately can be harmful because race, ethnicity and culture are important parts on a person’s identity. Avoid generalizations and carefully consider whether is important to provide information about a person’s race or ethnicity. It is also important to call people by the affiliations they call themselves. Various ethnic groups on campus have made it clear via the [President’s Anti-racism Working Group Report](#) (ARWG, 2020) that certain terminology is unacceptable. If it is relevant, be as specific and accurate as possible if preference is known. If it is relevant, and you have doubts about what word to use, it is better to ask the person. Be intentional about using words that can minimize harm and are culturally affirming.

Table 5 Terms related to race, ethnicity, and culture

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negro • n-word • coloured • Afro-American 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black (capitalize when referring to people, communities, cultures. Use as an adjective) • African Canadian (people of African descent from Canada) • African American (people of African descent from the United States) • Caribbean Canadian (people of Caribbean descent from Canada) • African • Afro-Latin American (people of African descent from Latin America) 	<p>Negro - the term negro is outdated and have a history of oppression; it should only be used within context; for example, the United Negro College Fund. Otherwise, it is an offensive word that should not be used. It is an imposed term that has been used to subjugate Black-embodied peoples (people of Black African ancestry).</p> <p>Everyone is encouraged to avoid using the n-word. This is not about censorship but about respecting human dignity and upholding academic responsibility. The use of the n-word can trigger feelings of frustration, inferiority, confusion, isolation, and disappointment, among others (ARWG, 2020, p. 20). The term is highly problematic, derogatory, and a racial slur. The n-word is linked to violence and brutality against Black people. No matter how the term</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
		<p>is adapted, it does not erase the historical and contemporary degradation of Black peoples. It emphasizes unequal power relations and dynamics when used. Discussions about the n-word must not include the actual saying or reproducing of the word which perpetuates harm. The term continues to carry racist connotations. We recommend finding alternative ways of discussing the term without repeating the racial slur. Scholar John McWhorter (2016; 2022) noted that the N-word is so deeply offensive across time and space that it leaves little room for other words to create anything like its grievous injury.</p> <p>It is highly recommended that anyone who uses the words ‘negro,’ or the n-word prepares the audience or provides a warning that this word could trigger some difficult emotions and let them know the reasons why this word will be used and provide the necessary</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
		<p>background information.</p> <p>Whether you are a Western student or a faculty member, using the n-word in class without providing the educational objectives or purposes of its use, can harm, re-traumatize, and hinder students' learning process. It is essential to put the word in context and not use it deliberately since this could harm racialized individuals even if the word is not directed to them.</p> <p>Whether you are a member of Western University community or not, it is important to understand that you can have discussions and communication about the term without reproducing, perpetuating and maintaining the n-word racial slur. It is important to foster and create a safe learning and working environment for everyone.</p> <p>To learn more about the use of the n-word, please refer to the additional readings list below this table.</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
		<p>Also, Black and African American are not always interchangeable. An African Canadian is a Canadian person of African descent, and a Caribbean Canadian is a Canadian of a Caribbean heritage. If known, use the word preferred by the person. If not, use the word Black.</p> <p>The term “coloured” is also outdated. It comes from a history of segregation in the USA (1877 to 1965) and in Canada where segregation was also legal up until the 1960s. In Canada and the USA, the term “colored” was on signs everywhere - bus stops, schools, swimming pools, theatres, and Black people were legally regulated and controlled in all aspects of everyday life.</p> <p>Black people are not people of colour.</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian • Oriental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian (to refer to people in Asia) • Asian Canadian (people of Asian descent from Canada) • Asian American (people of Asian descent from the USA) • South Asian • East Asian 	<p>When possible, refer to the specific nation, region, or country.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour - to be used in context) • Brown people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The specific group you are referring to. For example, ‘Black,’ ‘Indigenous,’ ‘Muslim,’ ‘Arabic,’ ‘Middle Eastern’ • People/Persons of Colour • Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour. • equity-deserving group member(s) • racialized people/individuals • global majority • made-marginalized people. 	<p>It is recommended to use the words in the acronym BIPOC. That is, to write or say Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour. Using the acronym BIPOC can convey the wrong message that these three groups have had the same experiences, or that they are equal. The same is true with the short form of People of Colour (POC), which can include various races and ethnicities. It is recommended to be as specific as possible when referring to race or ethnicity to recognize people’s or groups’ identities and histories. For example, avoid using the term Person of Colour when you are actually referring to a Black</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why?
		<p>person. Also, BIPOC could have different meanings depending on where the comma is placed. For example, Black Indigenous, and People of Colour.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latinx 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hispanic • Latin American • Cuban, Colombian, Venezuelan (be as specific as possible) 	<p>The term Latinx is controversial in many contexts. If used, it is recommended to provide background information as to why it is being used, for example, if it is being used to describe gender-expansive people.</p> <p>If known, it is better to use the term preferred by individuals.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • racialized person • member of racialized group • racialized group 	<p>The term “minority” is a general term that has been used as a blanket term for different equity-deserving groups. Also, the use of the word “minority” reinforces the idea of a White majority and can minimize historically marginalized people and promote erasure of distinctive communities and identities. This term is outdated.</p> <p>It is recommended to use the specific name of the group or groups you are referring to.</p>

Additional Resources

- Aladejebi, F. (2021). Black history: How racism in Ontario schools today is connected to a history of segregation. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/black-history-how-racism-in-ontario-schools-today-is-connected-to-a-history-of-segregation-147633>.
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- Government of Canada. (2022, September 28). *Guide on equity, diversity and inclusion Terminology*. <https://www.noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/equite-diversite-inclusion-equity-diversity-inclusion-eng#lettre-letter-E>
- Henry, N. (2021). Racial segregation of Black students in Canadian schools. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
- Kennedy, R. L. (1999). Who Can Say “Nigger”? And Other Considerations. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 26, 86–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2999172>
- McWhorter, J. H. (2016, August 24). *Why is colored person hurtful and person of color ok? A theory of racial euphemisms*. Slate Magazine; Slate. <https://slate.com/human-interest/2016/08/colored-person-versus-person-of-color-how-does-society-decide-which-racial-terms-are-acceptable.html>
- McWhorter, J. H. (2022, February 11). *The new N-word standard isn't progress*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/11/opinion/use-mention.html>
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- Western Libraries (2022). *Western Libraries inclusive language guide*. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/wllanguageguide/1>

Terms Related to Indigenous Peoples

The language related to Indigenous Peoples has evolved over time and using terminology and traditional names is crucial to demonstrate respect and build good relationships with Indigenous peoples. In this sense, recognizing outdated terminology and the appropriate words to use as substitutes is essential, keeping in mind that language is fluid and that some terms might change in the future.

It is also essential to recognize that specific words related to Indigenous Peoples might be acceptable or, on the contrary, offensive, depending on the context in which they are used. For example, the term ‘Indian’ is still used in some settings because of its legal and historical context (e.g., in the Indian Act), but within daily social use, this is an offensive term. Another example is the term ‘Aboriginal,’ which is referenced in the Canadian Constitution, but not to be used with social settings. The federal government ceased use of the term ‘Aboriginal’ in 2016 and started using the term ‘Indigenous’ instead.

Additionally, it is crucial to recognize the diversity among Indigenous Peoples. As explained in the [Guide for Working with Indigenous Students](#) (2018) provided by the Office of Indigenous Initiative at Western University, “Referring to ‘Indigenous people’ or ‘Indigenous culture’ is problematic because it is used in the singular form and thus homogenizes many Indigenous cultures” (p. 18). It is respectful to refer to Indigenous communities by the name they have given themselves and use the plural form when necessary to demonstrate diversity.

The [Guide for Working with Indigenous Students](#) (2018) also explains that it is inappropriate to use **possessive pronouns** such as “our Indigenous students” or “Indigenous peoples of Canada,” since this “reinforces an inferior and subjugated power relationship” (p. 18). Please refer to this guide to learn about working with Indigenous students.

Table 6 Terms related to Indigenous Peoples

Instead of	Why is this word not used	Try the Substitute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian • Aboriginal People 	The terms “Indian,” “Aboriginal People,” and	Indigenous person

Instead of	Why is this word not used	Try the Substitute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native people 	<p>“native people” are now considered derogatory and outdated when used in reference to an individual. They are still used in many governmental, historical, and legal documents. When used, it is important to provide some context.</p>	<p>Indigenous Peoples (refers to the Indigenous population in Canada collectively, including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous people or Indigenous culture (singular form) 	<p>“Indigenous people” and “Indigenous culture” are problematic terms because they do not recognize diverse Indigenous cultures that exist in Canada, where there are over 600 distinct First Nation communities alone. When possible, be as specific as possible in terms of the Indigenous nation you are referring to. For example, near London there are three Indigenous Nations: Deshkan Zhibing (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation); Onyota'a:ka (Oneida Nation of the Thames); and the Munsee-Delaware Nation.</p>	<p>The Nation or Name of the Indigenous Group or person you are specifically referring to. For example, ‘Ojibwe, Potawatomie, Odawa (Anishinaabe)’ or ‘Oneida, Mohawk, (Haudenosaunee),’ etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations People 	<p>First Nations (Indigenous groups who do not identify as Métis or Inuit) have different languages, cultures, traditions, and spiritual beliefs. There are more than 600 distinct First Nations communities in Canada.</p>	<p>Use the culturally specific names they use to describe themselves.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eskimo 	<p>Using the word “Eskimo” to refer to Inuit communities is considered derogatory. This</p>	<p>Inuit</p>

Instead of	Why is this word not used	Try the Substitute
	word in the Cree language means “eaters of raw meat.” The word “Inuit” comes from the Inuktitut language and is the preferred term of the Inuit.	

Additional Resources

- Wilson, K. (2018). *Pulling together: Foundations guide*. BCcampus.
<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/back-matter/glossary-of-terms/>
- Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion Consulting Inc. (n.d.). *Indigenous terminology in Canada: A quick guide*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from
<https://www.ccdiconsulting.ca/media/3336/indigenous-terminology-a-quick-guide.pdf>
- Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (2016). *Indigenous Peoples terminology: Guidelines for usage*. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-peoples-terminology-guidelines-for-usage>
- Indigenous Innovation. (2020, June 17). *Why we say “Indigenous” instead of “Aboriginal.”* <https://animikii.com/news/why-we-say-indigenous-instead-of-aboriginal>

Terms Related to Gender Identity and Sexuality

The language related to gender has evolved and will continue to evolve as people find words to better describe their gender identities. To understand and show respect toward gender identity, it is crucial to have a clear notion of the main terms surrounding this topic to avoid a misuse of words that can be offensive, humiliating, or hurtful. Some definitions to consider are:

1. Two-Spirit (2-Spirit): “Two-Spirit is a term introduced by Elder Myra Laramie in 1990 at the third annual Native American and Canadian Aboriginal LGBT people gathering in Winnipeg. It is “an English umbrella term to reflect and restore Indigenous traditions forcefully suppressed by colonization, honouring the fluid and diverse nature of gender and attraction and its connection to community and spirituality. It is used by some Indigenous People rather than, or in addition to, identifying as LGBTQI”. This term is the translation of the Anishinaabemowin term *niizh manidoowag*, which means two spirits. The teachings, roles, and responsibilities for a Two-Spirit person differs from community to community. Not all queer Indigenous people use this term, but Two-Spirit is an identity specific to being Indigenous and can only be claimed by Indigenous people” (CCDI, 2022, p. 33).
2. AFAB: “(pronounced ā-fab) Acronym meaning Assigned Female at Birth. AFAB people may or may not identify as female some or all of the time. AFAB is a useful term for educating about issues that may happen to these bodies without connecting to womanhood or femaleness. Generally not considered an identity, as calling a transgender man “AFAB,” for example, erases his identity as a man. Instead, use a person’s pronouns and self-description” ([PFLAG National Glossary, 2024](#)).
3. AMAB: “(pronounced ā-mab) Acronym meaning Assigned Male at Birth. AMAB people may or may not identify as male some or all of the time. AMAB is a useful term for educating about issues that may happen to these bodies without connecting to manhood or maleness. Generally not considered an identity, as calling a transgender woman “AMAB,” for example, erases her identity as a woman. Instead, use a person’s pronouns and self-description ([PFLAG National Glossary, 2024](#)).

4. Bigender: “Someone who moves between masculine and feminine identities or characteristics. They may sometimes identify as a man and sometimes as a woman” (CCDI, 2022, p. 22).
5. Cisgender: “A person whose gender identity is in alignment with the sex they were assigned at birth. The term is often shortened to ‘cis’” ([the519](#), 2020).
6. Gender identity: “a component of gender that describes a person’s psychological sense of their gender. Many people describe gender identity as a deeply felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male; a girl, a woman, or female; or a nonbinary gender (e.g., genderqueer, gender-nonconforming, gender-neutral, agender, gender-fluid) that may or may not correspond to a person’s sex assigned at birth, presumed gender based on sex assignment, or primary or secondary sex characteristics” ([APA](#), 2022).
7. Dead name: “The name that a person was given when they were born but they no longer use, usually a trans or non-binary person. Some people use the term ‘birth name’, but the word ‘dead’ is used to emphasize the seriousness of not using the person’s birth name. Use of someone’s ‘dead name’ is offensive and, in the case of a trans person, generally misgenders them” (CCDI, 2022, p. 24).
8. Gender affirming: “A broad description of actions or behaviours that validate someone’s gender, such as using someone’s correct pronouns (gender affirming language)” (CCDI, 2022, p. 25).
9. Gender binary: “A social system whereby people are thought to have either one of two genders: ‘man’ or ‘woman.’ These genders are expected to correspond to birth sex: male or female. In the gender binary system, there is no room for living between genders or for transcending the gender binary. The gender binary system is rigid and restrictive for many people whose sex assigned at birth does not match up with their gender, or whose gender is fluid and not fixed” ([the519](#), 2020).
10. Gender expansive: “Someone who identifies with a broader and more flexible concept of gender” (CCDI, 2022, p. 26).

11. Gender expression: “How a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language, and voice. A person’s chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender. All people, regardless of their gender identity, have a gender expression and they may express it in any number of ways” ([the519](#), 2020).
12. Gender non-conforming: “An umbrella term for someone who identifies or expresses themselves outside of the gender binary. The term may refer to someone who identifies as trans or it may not” (CCDI, 2022, p. 26).
13. Genderfluid: Someone who does not have a fixed gender identity. They may move between many gender identities and expressions.
14. Genderqueer/Non-binary: “Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as “feminine men” or “masculine women” or as androgynous, outside of the categories “boy/man” and “girl/woman.” People who are non-binary may or may not identify as trans” ([the519](#), 2020).
15. Indigiqueer: “An identity term that may be used by someone who is both Indigenous and queer that emphasizes the intersections of both identities” (CCDI, 2022, p. 27).
16. Intersex: “A person born with sex characteristics (chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals) that do not fit the typical medical definitions of male or female bodies” ([the519](#), 2020).
17. Misgender: “The act of referring to someone, intentionally or not, with a term that does not align with their gender identity. This includes using the wrong pronouns, using a trans person’s dead name, or using a gendered term (sir or ma’am, husband or wife, Mr., Mrs., etc.)” (CCDI, 2022, p. 28).
18. Non-binary: “An umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside of the man-woman binary” ([the519](#), 2020).

19. Preferred gender pronouns: “An outdated term that refers to the pronouns that align with someone’s gender identity. Pronouns are not a preference, but a fact. This term should be replaced by using only the word pronouns” (CCDI, 2022, p. 29).
20. Sex/biological sex: “The medical term based on physical characteristics and anatomy used to designate people as male, female, or intersex. Biological sex is distinct from gender identity” (CCDI, 2022, p. 30).
21. Sex assigned at birth: “Describes the sex, separate from gender identity, that someone was given at birth based on their external anatomy” (CCDI, 2022, p. 30).
22. Sexual orientation: “The direction of one’s attraction. Some people use the terms gay, straight, bi, pan, or lesbian to describe their experience” ([the519](#), 2020).
- a) Alloromantic (Allo): “a person who does experience romantic attraction (i.e. they are not on the aromantic spectrum). This term says absolutely nothing about the gender or genders that a person is attracted to - just that they experience romantic attraction” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).
- b) Allosexual (Allo): “a person who does experience sexual attraction (i.e. they are not on the asexual spectrum). This term says absolutely nothing about the gender or genders that a person is attracted to - just that they experience sexual attraction” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).
- c) Aromantic (Aro): “refers to a person who experiences a lack of romantic attraction. Aromantic individuals do not have an innate desire to be in a relationship with specific individuals, or they may feel disconnected from the idea of romance. Aromantic is also an umbrella term to describe the diversity of ways that people experience aromanticism” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).

- d) Asexual (Ace): “refers to a person who experiences a lack of sexual attraction. Asexual people may not want to have sex, they may not be interested in sex, they may not experience sex drive or libido, or they may be repulsed by sex - each person’s experience of asexuality is unique. Asexual is also an umbrella term to describe the diversity of ways that people experience asexuality” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).
- e) Bisexual (Bi): “a person who experiences attraction to some people of their gender, and some people of another gender. The term bisexual does not necessarily enforce the gender binary - it simply means that the person experiences attraction to two or more genders” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).
- f) Heterosexual (Het): “a person who is primarily attracted to people who are not the same gender as them. The concept of heterosexuality is often socially constructed, with the idea of ‘man’ being attracted to ‘woman’. However, that does not always resonate for some people - for example, a cis man may be attracted to a nonbinary person, and they may both use the term ‘heterosexual’ ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).
- g) Gay: “someone who experiences attraction primarily to someone of the same gender” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).
- h) Lesbian (Les): “typically used to refer to a woman who experiences attraction primarily to other women or towards feminine people. The term lesbian includes anyone who identifies as a woman: including trans women. Some nonbinary people may also use this term if it resonates with their own sense of identity and experience of attraction” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).
- i) Pansexual (Pan): “A person who experiences attraction for people regardless of gender. Pansexual people may refer to themselves as being gender-indifferent, asserting that someone’s gender is not a determining factor in their attraction to others” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).

- j) Queer: “the term “queer” is used to refer to someone who is not heterosexual to describe their individual sexual orientation. Additionally, the term queer can also be used as an umbrella term to describe the diverse community outside of heterosexuality” ([Trans Wellness Ontario, n.d.](#)).
23. Trans: “An umbrella term referring to people whose gender identities differ from the sex they were assigned at birth. “Trans” can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming (gender variant or genderqueer)” ([the519, 2020](#)).
24. Trans man: “Someone who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a man. They may be at any point along their transition or may not be transitioning at all. Some people prefer to be referred to as a trans man, whereas some may prefer to be referred to as a man” (CCDI, 2022, p. 31).
25. Trans woman: “Someone who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman. They may be at any point along their transition or may not be transitioning at all. Some people prefer to be referred to as a trans woman, whereas some may prefer to be referred to as a woman” (CCDI, 2022, p. 31).
26. Transgender: “An umbrella term used to describe a person whose gender identity is anything other than their sex assigned at birth. The term is also used more narrowly to describe someone who identifies as or is transitioning/has transitioned to align their body with their gender identity. May be shortened to ‘trans’” (CCDI, 2022, p. 31).
27. Transition: “The process of changing one’s gender expression to align with their gender identity. Transition is not a linear process and is a deeply personal experience. There are four general aspects of transition:
- Social: name, pronouns, clothing, hair, etc.

- Medical: hormone therapy.
- Surgical: gender affirming surgeries.
- Legal: changing legal identification, birth certificate, driver’s license, passport, etc.

It is important to understand that the transition process can vary greatly from person to person, there is no set start or end point, and a person does not need to do all four steps to transition. The term ‘transition’ can also be misleading as a person is not changing their gender, they are changing their bodies and appearance to align with their already existing gender identity” (CCDI, 2022, p. 31-2).

Note: It is not appropriate to ask a person about their transition. If you want to learn about the OHRC’s Policy on Preventing Discrimination because of Gender Identity and Gender Expression (2014), please visit <https://bc.healthycaringcore.ca/resources/words-are-powerful-style-guide-writing-and-speaking>

Below is a list of some outdated words and more appropriate substitutes. Keep in mind that these words will keep evolving and that it is important to unlearn and learn as the inclusive language changes.

Table 7 Terms related to gender identity and sexuality

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • birth sex • natal sex • sex change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assigned sex • sex assigned at birth • transition-related surgeries, gender-affirming surgeries or gender-confirming surgeries. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • born a girl, born female • born a boy, born male 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assigned female at birth (AFAB) • assigned male at birth (AMAB) 	

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homosexual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gay, lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, queer, polysexual, or pansexual, among others. 	<p>Homosexual is an outdated term to describe a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transvestite • transsexual (unless being used medically) • transgenderist • transgenderism • transgendered • is transgenering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2SLGBTQ+, 2SLBGTQIA+, etc. • transgender people • trans and gender nonbinary folks or folx • genderqueer queer* • a trans person • is transitioning • trans woman • trans man 	<p>Consider your audience when using the term “queer”; not everyone receives this word positively; many members of the LGBTQIA+ community have now reclaimed it.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mankind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humankind, human beings 	<p>Using “man” in words such as “mankind” are gendered. It is recommended to use a neutral language, such as “humankind”, for example. This can also be applied to other words and phrases, such as “manning the office”, where the</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why
		substitute “staffing the office” can be used.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manning the office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staffing the office 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • man hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working hours 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manmade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • artificial, synthetic, or constructed 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manpower • man a project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff a project 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual preference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual orientation/sexuality/sexual identity 	The verb “to prefer” implies that an individual has a choice in terms of their sexual identity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • females • males 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • women, men, girls, boys • cisgender men, cis men, cisgender women, cis women, cis people, cis allies • transgender men, trans men, transgender women, trans women, transgender people, trans people • gender-fluid people, gender-nonconforming people, gender-expansive people, gender-creative people, agender people, bigender people, genderqueer people • individuals, adults, children, adolescents, people, humans 	Specific nouns reduce the possibility of stereotypic bias and often clarify discussion. Avoid automatically placing socially dominant groups first (e.g., men then women).

Instead of	Try the Substitute	Why
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ladies • gentlemen • guys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • folks • colleagues • everyone • individuals 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preferred pronouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identified pronouns • self-identified pronouns • pronouns 	<p>“Preferred pronouns” implies that people have a choice about their gender when this is not really a preference. It is part of their identity.</p> <p>When referring to a known individual, use the person’s identified pronouns.</p> <p>If an individual identified pronoun is not known, use the singular “they” to avoid misgendering the person.</p> <p>Continue reading to learn more about pronouns.</p>

(Sources: APA, 2020b; CCDI, 2022; University of Wisconsin, 2022)

Gendered Pronouns

“A gendered pronoun is a pronoun that references a person’s gender, such as ‘hers/his,’ ‘he/she,’ ‘him/her,’ or ‘herself/himself.’ Pronouns in English originally developed around binary gender

norms (male/female) and may not match a person's gender identity or expression. It is more inclusive to use the gender-neutral pronoun 'they' in written communication. Further, many nonbinary and gender fluid persons prefer the gender-neutral pronoun 'they' in reference to themselves" (British Columbia Public Service Agency, 2018, p. 21).

Importance of Using the Correct Pronouns

For many people within society, it is common practice to make assumptions about a person's gender based on how they look. However, the conclusions are not always correct, which can potentially harm members of our community. Using the appropriate pronouns when addressing someone is a sign of respect and validation—ignoring the personal pronouns that a person prefers is offensive and has a tremendous impact on individuals, as it perpetuates systems of oppression that have affected members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Sharing Your Pronouns

To share your pronouns, you could say, "Hi, my name is Lisa, and I go by the pronoun 'she'" or "I'm Alex, and I'm referred to by 'he/him' pronouns."

Not everyone feels comfortable indicating their pronouns in every setting, and no one should feel forced to do so. If they prefer not to share their pronouns, only refer to the person by their name. For example, "Here you go, Peter" and "Let's call Beth."

Asking Someone Their Pronouns

If you meet someone new one-to-one, you might say, "Hi, I'm Lisa, and I go by 'they' pronouns.

How should I refer to you?" You could also ask:

- "What pronouns do you use?"
- "How would you like me to refer to you?"
- "Can you remind me what pronouns I should be using for you?"

If you used the wrong pronouns and realized it right away, apologize immediately and move on. If you discover your mistake later, apologize in private and move on.

If you hear someone use the wrong pronoun to refer to a person, kindly correct the person who made a mistake in private if necessary.

Traditional Pronouns Table

Table 8 Traditional Pronouns

Pronouns	Subject	Object	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun
He	He discussed the outcomes with the team.	I met <i>him</i> .	<i>His</i> work was reviewed earlier.	The books are <i>his</i> .
She	<i>She</i> discussed the outcomes with the team.	I met <i>her</i> .	<i>Her</i> work was reviewed earlier.	The books are <i>hers</i>

Nonbinary Pronouns Table

The following chart provides examples of some nonbinary gender pronouns in various forms.

This list is not exhaustive.

Table 9 Nonbinary Pronouns

Pronouns of reference	Nominative (subject)	Objective (object)	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun
they/them/theirs	<i>They</i> discussed the outcomes with the team.	I met <i>them</i> .	<i>Their</i> work was reviewed earlier.	The books are <i>theirs</i> .
per/pers	<i>Per</i> discussed the outcomes with the team.	I met <i>per</i> .	<i>Pers</i> work was reviewed earlier.	The books are <i>pers</i> .
ey/em/eirs	<i>Ey</i> discussed the outcomes with the team. (“ay”)	I met <i>em</i> .	<i>Eir</i> work was reviewed earlier. (“air”)	The books are <i>eirs</i> . (“airs”)

Pronouns of reference	Nominative (subject)	Objective (object)	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun
ze/hir/hirs	<i>Ze</i> discussed the outcomes with the team. (“zee”)	I met <i>hir</i> . (“heer”)	<i>Hir</i> work was reviewed earlier.	The books are <i>hirs</i> . (“heers”)
ze/zir/zirs	<i>Ze</i> discussed the outcomes with the team. (“zee”)	I met <i>zir</i> . (“zeer”)	I met <i>zir</i> . (“zeer”)	The books are <i>zirs</i> . (“zeers”)

(Adapted from University of Wisconsin, [2022](#))

**Practice the use of pronouns on the following website:

https://www.practicewithpronouns.com/#/?_k=ejsnm6

Learning about and using the proper pronouns might be new to you. With practice it will become familiar.

Additional Resources

- The 519. (2020, February). *Glossary of terms*. <https://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary/>
- UN Women. (n.d.). *Gender-inclusive Language Guidelines. Promoting Gender Equality through the Use of Language*. Retrieved 2022, August 4 from <https://itffoundation.org/get-inspired-tt4all?file=files/cms/get-inspired/gi-tt4all/gender-equity/guidelines-on-gender-inclusive-language-en.pdf&cid=24529>
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English*. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Toolbox for using gender-inclusive language in English*. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/toolbox.shtml>

Terms Related to Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status is “the position of an individual or group on the socioeconomic scale, which is determined by a combination of social and economic factors such as income, amount and kind of education, type and prestige of occupation, place of residence, and—in some societies or parts of society—ethnic origin or religious background” ([APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.](#)).

The language related to socioeconomic status can sometimes be derogatory and non-inclusive. It is essential to be as specific as possible to avoid generalizations, stereotypes, and biases. In this sense, providing context is crucial (for example, country, socioeconomic guidelines, etc.).

Furthermore, using non-inclusive language can reinforce and perpetuate current systems of oppression.

Table 10 Terms related to socioeconomic status

Instead of	Try the Substitute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the poor low-class people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people whose incomes are below the federal poverty threshold
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • neighbourhoods with high poverty rates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people whose self-reported incomes were in the lowest income bracket • undomiciled/ without fixed address • people experiencing homelessness • people who are unhoused
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low/high class • poor/rich 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low/high income • below poverty level

Terms Related to Marital and Family Status

Titles such as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. are gendered, and people tend to use them based on assumptions commonly rooted in physical appearance, for example. When someone does not know the individual they are addressing, it is appropriate to ask how the person would like to be addressed. When possible, use people's first names, or a title such as 'Professor' or 'Teacher' and people's last name.

Regardless of an individual's gender, it is recommended to use neutral terms to refer to couples, such as 'spouse' or 'partner'. The word 'spouse' is usually used to indicate that a couple is married, and the term 'partner' commonly suggests that individuals are in a relationship. Using these neutral words is a sign of respect and validation. However, this might change depending on cultural norms since, in some cultures, the terms 'spouse' or 'partner' might imply a state of non-marital status.

Table 11 Terms related to marital status and family status

Instead of	Try the Substitute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wife • husband • girlfriend • boyfriend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spouse • partner • significant other <p>Note: The recommendation is to use the specific term that the person you are communicating with uses to describe themselves or their significant other. For example, a person might introduce themselves or their significant other as wife or husband, in which case it is advised to use these terms. If the gender is not identified by the individual, it is best to use a gender-neutral term, such as partner or spouse, for example.</p>

Instead of	Try the Substitute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • natural parent • real parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • birth parent • biological parent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mother • father 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parent • guardian • adoptive parent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sister • brother 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sibling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • son • daughter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child • kid

(Source: APA, 2020b)

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