

Inclusive Language Guide

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me”

Well, that's not true. Inclusivity has been raised as a critical business concern. While flexible norms might make it appear murky at times, it's critical to follow best practices to manage your brand's reputation and success. What you say about yourself as a brand reflects who you are. According to research, communicating inclusive principles is becoming increasingly vital for a company's long-term success.

This guide provides marketers with a clear, practical, and effective framework for inclusive language to lead and correctly steer their companies.

Inclusive language avoids stereotyping or excluding people based on their ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, ability, financial status, or other factors. Unconscious gender norms are frequently conveyed through word choice.

As a result, marketers must use inclusive language with care. Put another way; it's about making your brand feel inviting and approachable to everyone.

Let's get started.

4 in 5+

consumers stated that they would purchase from a more inclusive sales brand than a less inclusive brand with the exact offers.^{*1}

75%

of Gen Z buyers say they'll boycott companies discriminating against colour and sexuality in ads.^{*2}

By 2025,

75%

of the global workforce will consist of millennials. One of the most racially and ethnically diverse generations in US history.^{*3}

“

Diversity, equity, & inclusion [DEI] affect the bottom line & marketing outcomes.

83%

of millennial workers are actively engaged when they believe their organization fosters an inclusive culture, while

60%

are enthusiastically engaged when their organization does not.^{*4}

In 2019, a survey found that

64%

of all respondents took some action after seeing an ad they considered diverse or inclusive.^{*5}

2/3

of women will skip ads if they feel the ads negatively stereotype women.^{*6}

Generic Language

Non-inclusive	Inclusive
Common man	Averages (or ordinary) person
Every man for himself	Everyone for themselves.
Founding fathers	Founders
Girl	Woman (unless when talking about age groups of people)
Man; mankind	People, human beings, humanity; humankind; the human species; the human race; we; ourselves; men and women; one; the public; society; the self; human nature
Man-made	Handmade; manufactured; artificial; machine-made; synthetic; of human construction; of human origin; human-induced; technogenic
Layman	Layperson; non-specialist; nonprofessional; novice
Manpower	Workers; workforce; employees; labour; human power; human resources
Master plan	Main plan; primary plan; comprehensive plan; vision
Mother country	Homeland
Mother tongue	Native language
Noblemen	Noble people
Yes-man	Avid follower, supporter
Young man	Youth; teenager
Boy and boys (for men 18 and older)	Man and men
Girl and girls (for women 18 and older)	Woman and women
Guy(s)	Everyone, everybody, team, folks
Disabled	Person with a disability
Addict	Person with an addiction
Biological male or female	Person assigned male or female at birth
Black or brown	Black (varies based on individual's preference)
Blacklisted, White Lists	Block list, Safe list, Allow list, Deny list
Husband and wife, girlfriend and boyfriend	Partner
Homosexual, homo	Gay, gay man, gay person
Handicapped parking	Parking for persons with a disability
Disabled toilet	Toilet for persons with a disability
Mulatto	Multiracial, biracial (varies depending on the individual's heritage and language)
Both genders	All genders
Minorities	Underrepresented groups
She or he	They
Gay and lesbian, the gay community	The LGBTIQ+ community
Maternity or paternity leave	Parental leave
Men and women	People
Mothering or fathering	Parenting
Mother's facilities	Parenting facilities
Your husband/wife	Your partner



Professional & Occupational Titles

Non-inclusive	Inclusive
Authoress	Author (for both)
Craftsman	Crafts worker; artisan; craftsperson; (plural) craftspeople
Cameraman	Camera operator; photographer; (plural) camera crew
Cleaning lady	Cleaner
Chairman	Chair; chairperson; president; presiding officer When addressing the individual: Madam Chairperson, Mr. Chairperson
Barman; barmaid	Business executive; business manager; businessperson; business entrepreneur; head of company; (plural: business community; business people)
Delivery boy	Courier; messenger
Ladies and Gentlemen	Esteemed guests
Fireman	Firefighter; (plural) fire crew; fire brigade
Foreman	Supervisor; superintendent
Hostess	Host
Housewife	Homemaker; consumer; customer; shopper
Masseuse	Massage therapist
Master of ceremonies	Host; emcee; moderator; convener
Ombudsman	Mediator; trouble-shooter; ombudsperson; ombuds; ombud
Policeman/fireman	Policeman/fireman
Salesman; Sales girl	Salesclerk; sales representative; sales agent; shop assistant; shop worker
Serviceman	Service representative
Spaceman	Astronaut
Spokesman	Spokesperson; representative; official
Sportsman	Athlete: sportsman/sportswoman (where a specified person is meant)
Waitress, Waiter	Waitron

Demographic & Race Language

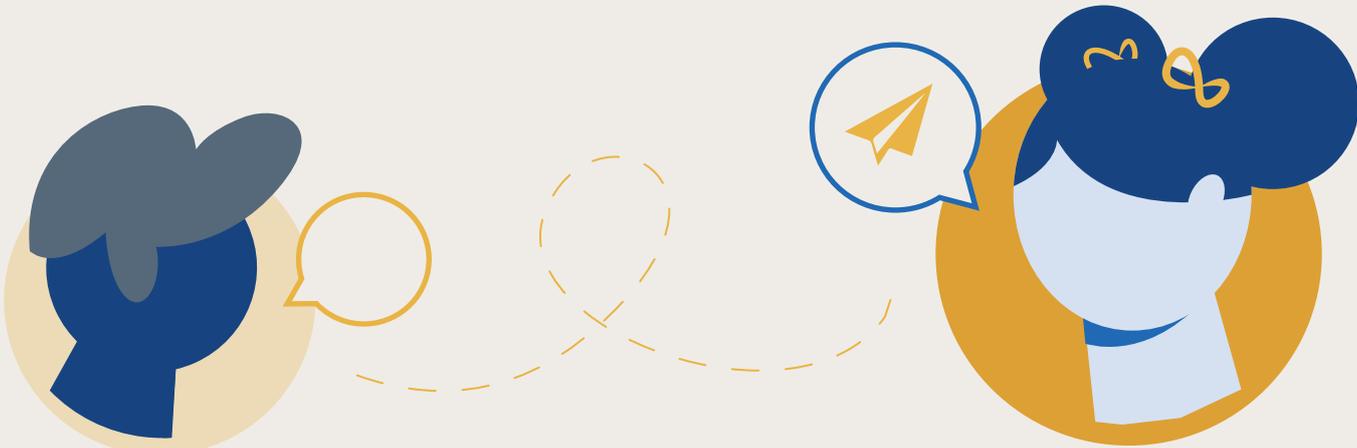
Non-inclusive	Inclusive
Oriental	Asian (Describing the customs, people, and culture or a particular area of Asia; be specific when possible)
Class	Socioeconomic status
Alien, foreigners, "those people"	Immigrant, visitors, travelers
Ethnic, urban	People or person of color, multiracial
Old person, young person	Person
Mixed race, Coloured	Biracial, multiracial
Minorities	Underrepresented groups People of colour
Third world country	Developing country

Medical Language

Non-inclusive	Inclusive
Sufferer	Survivor
Suffering from	Living with, being treated for
Diabetic	Person with diabetes
Albino	Person with albinism
The disabled/The handicapped	People with disabilities, Disabled People
Fits, spells, attacks	Seizures
Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user
Paraplegic	Person with paraplegia
Dwarf, Midget	Short stature, someone with dwarfism

Mental Health Language

Non-inclusive	Inclusive
Mentally ill, crazy, insane, psycho, schizo	Person with mental illness
Bipolar person or "they're bipolar"	Person with bipolar disorder
Down's, retarded, mentally disabled	Person with down syndrome



6 Pointers to Help You Build towards Inclusive Language*

These techniques can help your company and its marketing avoids inappropriate language and progress toward more mindful and proactive communication.

1

Don't assume you know who your target market is.

Your audience is likely diverse in cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and sexual characteristics and origins. Even if you sell to a very narrow cohort, avoid generalizing or pigeonholing the individuals you're engaging with or talking about.

2

Instead of disregarding differences, embrace them.

Inclusivity does not imply that we ignore our differences. It's about keeping these identification features and qualities from becoming impediments to interacting and connecting as humans.

3

Highlight stories rather than individual characteristics.

Authentic and contextual representation is required. If it's not pertinent to the plot, don't tokenize someone by bringing up their colour, gender, or identity.

4

Examine stereotypes.

In language, they are highly rooted and widespread. Even seemingly positive connections (e.g., "Women are so organized!") can be harmful since they categorize individuals and prejudice.

5

Use person-first and gender-neutral language.

Nobody wants their characteristics to define them. Even if unknowingly, we are doing precisely that when we say something like "a crippled individual." Adopting person-first terminology — "a handicapped person" — is a significant change. If you don't know someone's preference, you can use neutral pronouns (they, them).

6

Recognize and correct errors (perfection is not the goal)

The objective isn't to achieve perfection. Learn from your errors. Make your audience feel at ease. Genuine commitment is characterized by sincere repentance and ongoing progress.

* From LinkedIn's Inclusive Language for Marketer's Pocket Guide

