



Academic & Student Affairs

Inclusive Language Guide

Preamble

Language is a way of communicating, acknowledging and validating identities, ideas, concerns, requests and culture. Inclusive language communicates our values. We choose to represent our values and ideals at Florida International University as inclusive, respectful, and kind.

FIU's Inclusive Language Guide

All Florida International University administration, faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to use oral or written language that is welcoming to and affirming of everyone's race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, religion, ability or disability, health status, or veteran status. We should pay attention to individuals or social groups who are currently or were historically marginalized and oppressed. The use of inclusive and welcoming oral and written language is the standard for all our departmental documents, correspondences, marketing materials, academic coursework materials, presentations, conversations, lectures, syllabi, as well as written and oral student assessment materials.

This guide is developed to educate the FIU community and invoke our commitment towards:

- Meeting inclusive standards in professional or social communications;
- Creating written content that utilizes inclusive language;
- Adapting old or previously established content to fit these standards;
- Reflecting and supporting people's chosen identities in name, pronoun use, and with other relevant identity-affirming language;
- Defining best practices for inclusive language that view people as both unique individuals deserving of acknowledgement and emphasizing all people's right to dignity and equity as humans regardless of unique descriptors;
- Validating the agency of the individual(s) being spoken of in the determination of their own identities and needs
- Ensuring that all research and data collected, all policies put forward, and all areas of our FIU include the perspectives and voices of the individuals or groups involved or reflect the diversity of the population being represented; and
- Adapting our language to be more inclusive and understanding which takes focus, time, energy, and ongoing assessment to undo former habits.

Examples for Using Inclusive Language

General Keys

Always use and center the specific language that people ask you to use for them when you are speaking or writing about them as individuals or as communities.

Utilize nouns and leave out the adjectives and descriptors about a person or group of people when it's unnecessary to do so.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please help these gays find their seats. • There is an Asian student waiting at the front desk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please help these individuals find their seats. • There is a student waiting at the front desk.

When a group or individual label is necessary (e.g., in a presentation about that group or individual), use it as an adjective and not as a noun.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to know how to best support gays. • Chaz Bono is a transgender. • We should make accommodations for the disabled. • Let's ensure we have colored people represented on this committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to know how to best support gay people. • Chaz Bono is a transgender person. • We should make accommodations for people with a disability. • Let's ensure we have people of color represented on this committee.

Avoid using stereotypes and extremes or generalizations in language. Speak to the exact situation, person, or perspective that you have and do not apply it broadly.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Spanish people are hard to understand when they speak. • No black people like to watch or play hockey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My professor who is from Mexico has an accent that is hard for me to understand. • I do not know any black people who like to watch or play hockey.

Avoid normalizing language or medically pathologizing language

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal people don't need the support but people with disabilities do. • Intersex people are afflicted with a condition that results in gender defects that need to be fixed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support is needed for people with disabilities. • Some intersex people have a biological gender variation that requires medical intervention while some do not require such interventions for them to live healthy, happy lives.

Culture, Race and Ethnicity

Refer to the racial or ethnic background of a person or people only if it is relevant to the discussion and avoid emphasizing differences of the groups.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I had a great conversation with one of our black student workers today. That Asian person with the blue backpack got a 100 on her midterm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I had a great conversation with one of our student workers today. The person with the blue backpack got a 100 on her midterm.

Avoid using promoting “racial and ethnic invisibility” (e.g., using terms that overly generalize where people are from, instead use their country of origin). If you need to describe where someone is from do not use umbrella terms. Do not refer to people as Hispanic, Asian, African and Caribbean when you could say their country of origin. You should be specific and use Cuban instead of Hispanic, Japanese instead of Asian, Nigerian instead of African and Haitian instead of Caribbean.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is our new student intern and she is from Africa. Wow this décor is really Asian. Doesn't everyone from the Caribbean eat rice and beans? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is our new student intern and she is from Ghana, a country in Africa. Wow, I like this décor. Is it Japanese or Taiwanese inspired? I like the way people in the Cuban Culture cook their version of rice and beans.

When writing do not hyphenate racial ethnicities. i.e.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American-Indian African-American Japanese-American Italian-American Chinese-American 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native American/Indigenous People African American Japanese American Italian American Chinese American

Religion

It is important to ask how people identify themselves and be aware of complexities within all religious identities. For example, not all Arabs are Muslim, and many nationalities and ethnicities include various religious practices and traditions. Religious identity is used as an adjective to describe people, not as a noun. Hatred toward specific religions can be portrayed in variety of ways. For example, antisemitism is described as the latent or overt hostility or hatred directed towards, or discrimination against Jewish individuals for reasons connected to their religion, ethnicity, and their cultural, historical, intellectual and religious heritage. Antisemitism has also been expressed through individual acts of physical violence, vandalism, the organized destruction of entire communities and genocide. In more recent times, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish

collective. Additionally, Islamophobia is defined as the dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force. To learn more about religious organizations from different faith traditions at FIU, click [here](#).

Inappropriate Example	Positive & Affirming Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jews • Muslims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish People, People who are Jewish, People who follow/practice Judaism • Muslim people, People who are Muslim, People who follow/practice Islam

Gender

Avoid using terms that put down or elevate one's actions in relation to a certain gender.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "You throw like a girl" • "Boys don't cry" • "Man-up" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Try to throw better/faster/stronger" • "It's ok to cry" • "Be strong"

Replace the term "man" in words that are exclusive of gender and serves no purpose.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshman • Man-made • To man • Manhole • Manpower • Mankind • Manhours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First year • Artificial, human-caused • To operate • Sewer cover • Workforce • Humanity • Hours worked

Use terms that include all genders not just men or just women

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairwoman / chairman • Congresswoman / congressman • Mailwoman / mailman • Policewoman / policeman • Saleswoman / salesman • Stewardess / steward • Waitress / waiter • Firewoman / fireman • Businesswoman / businessman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair, chairperson • Legislator, congressional rep. • Mail carrier, postal worker • Police officer • Salesperson, sales associate • Flight attendant • Server • Firefighter • Businessperson

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Make sure that the language you are using, when referring to a person's sexual orientation or gender identity accurately and appropriately describes people using adjectives and not nouns.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homosexuals • Heteros / Heterosexuals / Breeders • Gay (n.) - "a gay" / "gays" • Transgendered (v.) • Transgender (n.) – "a transgender" / "transgenders" • Admitted / avowed homosexual • Fag, faggot, dyke, homo, sodomite, deviant, or perverted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gay people • Straight People • Gay (adj.) - "a gay person / gay people" • Transgender (adj.) person or "a person who transitioned" • Transgender (adj.) – "transgender person / people" • Openly lesbian / gay / bisexual or "out" • Do not use these words to describe people's sexuality or gender

Avoid negating people's existence and relationships by using heteronormative and binary language.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Husband / Wife • "You may kiss the bride" • Girlfriend / Boyfriend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner / Spouse • "You may kiss each other" • Significant Other / Lover / Partner

Do not use expressions that trivialize and/or disparage people's sexual orientation.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBTQ people (when only talking about sexuality or LGBTQ people) • The homosexual lifestyle • The gay agenda • Sexual preference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBTQ people • The LGBTQ or queer community, LGBTQ experiences, LGBTQ lives • LGBTQ human rights or equality or specify the issue "adding sexual orientation to legislation on employment discrimination" • Sexual attraction/desire, sexuality, or sexual orientation

Avoid using terms that are outdated medical terms

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homosexuals • Transsexuals • Hermaphrodites • Sex Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gay people • Transgender people • Intersex people • Gender Affirming Surgery / Gender Affirming Hormones

Use gender neutral or gender inclusive language and pronouns particularly when you don't know the gender of whom you are speaking to or about

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. / Miss. / Mrs. / Mr. / Sir / Ma'am / Madam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mx. / If they are a Dr., use that title / Don't use a title at all

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She / He • Guys / Ladies and Gentlemen • Preferred pronouns • Lantina / Latino • Born Female/Male Natal Female/Male Female-bodied / Male-bodied Normal female/Male Real woman / Real man Not transgender Normal gender • Mother/Father or Mom/Dad • Women / Men (Restrooms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They/Them • Y'all / Folks / Everyone / Guests • Pronouns / Chosen Pronouns • Latine or Latinx • Cisgender woman / cis woman Cisgender man / cis man Cisgender person / people Assigned female / male at birth • Parents, Family Members, Guardians, or Caregiver • Inclusive Restroom All-Gender Restroom Stalls / Urinals + Stalls
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Use terms that are not derogatory and that affirm people's self-designation of their own genders and bodies. Use non-binary language and gender-neutral language when you don't know the person's gender identity or pronouns. Don't make a big scene if you get someone's gender or pronouns wrong, simply correct yourself and move on.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred pronouns • Real Name • Preferred / Fake Name • Both genders / Opposite genders • She-male, He-she, It, Tranny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronouns / Chosen Pronouns • Given Name • Name / Chosen Name • All genders / Any gender • Refer to them using their chosen name or gender neutrally use They/Them/Their

Ability & Health Status

If you need to use a person's disability in their description, use people first language. The person has the condition rather than the person is the condition.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Down's Baby • Handicapped • Handicap parking • Cripple / Lame / Deformed • Stroke victim • Wheelchair bound • Epileptic • Retarded / Mentally Handicapped 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with Down syndrome • Person with a disability • Accessible parking, parking for people with disabilities • Person with a disability, person who uses leg braces, etc. • Person who had a stroke • Person using a wheelchair • Person with epilepsy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIDS/HIV Victim • Spastic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with Learning difficulties / Person with intellectual disabilities • Person living with HIV • Person with cerebral palsy
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Do not use the word normal to describe people without disabilities. This unnecessarily and incorrectly devalues people with disabilities.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't need volunteers for the normal kids only the handicapped ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need volunteers for students with disabilities.

Be conscious of the history behind certain terms related to mental health which were sometimes used to categorize people who were institutionalized against their will. Use language that recognizes the feeling that person gave you rather than labeling their behavior. Do not inappropriately use mental diagnoses to describe a mood or appreciation.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That person or behavior or thing is crazy / nuts / insane / deranged / demented. • They are a lunatic / maniac / psycho. • I'm so depressed. • I'm so OCD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That person or behavior or thing is surprising to me. • They are behaving in an unexpected way or in a way that frightens / frustrates / confuses me. • I'm sad. • I'm super organized.

Do not refer to people as the medical diagnosis they have or a historically derogatory or inaccurate term for a medical diagnosis.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIDS/HIV Victim • Epileptic • Dwarf / Midget • Paraplegic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person living with HIV • Person with epilepsy / person who gets seizures • Person of short stature, little person • Person with Paraplegia

Class

When discussing an individual's socio-economic status, use language that reflects the person.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless • Poor, poverty-stricken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person experiencing homelessness • Economically disadvantaged, person living at or below poverty line, people experiencing poverty

Age

When referring to a person's age, avoid language that is generalizing, demeaning or discriminatory. Use language that reflects a person's humanity and individuality rather than stereotypes attributed to a certain group.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Old• The Aged• Geriatric• Senile• Kids / Girls / Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Older adults• Seniors• Mature aged• Young people• Younger person

Veteran Status

Do not assume a veteran has seen gunfire, war, or killed people. Not all veterans are involved in direct combat or warfare.

Non-Inclusive	Positive & Affirming
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• So, you are a veteran, have you ever killed anyone?• You're not a real veteran, unless you've been in battle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• So, you are a veteran, can you tell me about your military experience?• Thank you for your service.

References

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