

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE

HOOD COLLEGE

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Introduction

Hood College strives to foster a safe and welcoming space for students, faculty and staff. This requires promoting an inclusive community where our differences are celebrated rather than shunned. As we commit to creating a diverse and supportive learning and work environment, the exchange of unique perspectives and ideas is critical to uphold a culture of mutual respect and understanding.

Part of this ongoing effort is the creation of the Hood College Inclusive Language Guide. Whether it is written, spoken or visual—language matters. Our words have a powerful and lasting effect. Learning about and using identity-affirming language allows everyone to feel recognized, valued and empowered.

The Inclusive Language Guide should be considered a “living document.” Because language is constantly evolving, so too will the guide be updated to remain relevant regarding best practices and appropriate word choice. Together, we can continue to eliminate bias from our language and remain thoughtful in our roles as communicators and educators.

Guiding Principles

The Inclusive Language Guide is intended for the entire Hood College community. It is important to note that while the guide is comprehensive in scope, it should not be considered definitive. If you have suggestions for new content or take issue with anything included/omitted, please do not hesitate to contact marketingoffice@hood.edu.

These guidelines can help us make a concerted effort to be more self-aware and empathetic in the ways we communicate. Inclusive language is grounded in affirmation and acknowledgement. The more we understand about the relationship between identity and language, the more intentional we can be about how we choose to speak.

What exactly is inclusive language? According to “Guidelines for Inclusive Language” by the Linguistic Society of America, inclusive language “acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences and promotes equal opportunities.” This guide aims to highlight best practices and establish shared language, while demonstrating how to communicate clearly in an inclusive manner.

The guide has been adapted from a variety of scholarly sources, including the Associated Press Stylebook, the Diversity Style Guide, the National Center on Disability and Journalism, the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the National Association of Black Journalists. In collaboration with the Division of Community and Inclusivity, Hood faculty, staff and student organizations have all made contributions.

As you read the guide, here are some helpful tips to keep in mind:

- **Identity is personal**
 - People have the right to describe themselves as they wish. This guide offers general insight and terminology that cannot override any individual's understanding of their own experiences.
- **Respect is key**
 - Not everyone is comfortable openly sharing their identity. Make efforts to create safe spaces where people can be visible to the extent they desire. Take time for introspection and identify where you experience discomfort or worry. Acknowledging your feelings will help to identify your role in shaping a respectful environment for yourself and others.
- **Ask for clarity**
 - During first-time interactions, state your intentions to use respectful language. You might ask, "How do you wish for me to refer to you?" Describing your own identifiers is a good way to invite others to do the same: "Hello! I'm Dr. Kline. My pronouns are she/her/hers. I identify as Jamaican."
- **Be thoughtful**
 - Try to be aware of implicit biases and stereotypes. Avoid describing people based on appearance or assumptions. Instead of describing someone based on perceived notions of racial, ethnic or gender identity, refer to individuals by their role in the workplace.
- **Be specific**
 - Avoid hiding behind vague words and generalizations when you feel uncomfortable. If you know the specific makeup of a group, be clear and unambiguous with your word choice. For instance, instead of saying "diverse individuals," use "people of color" when appropriate; or use "Asian American," "Native American," etc. Being specific lets people know they are seen and heard.
- **Be kind**
 - Acknowledging that you understand the importance of using inclusive language invites humility—we are all learning and making an effort together. If you make a mistake or misspeak, take responsibility and listen to the impact the error had on the other person. Let people know you are trying to improve and thank them for their patience. Remember, being confused or uncomfortable is the first step to learning something new.

Race and Ethnicity

While definitions vary, *race* is generally considered to be a socially constructed concept used to group people based on certain factors, including but not limited to historical affiliation, physical characteristics and social identity. For example, people might identify their race as Aboriginal, Asian, Black, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander or white. *Ethnicity* refers to shared culture, such as language, ancestry, practices and beliefs.

For example, people might identify as African American, Latino, Italian or Persian. Many individuals identify with several racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The terms *race* and *ethnicity* are easily confused. Be clear about whether you are referring to a racial group or ethnic group. Race is not universal; one must be careful not to impose racial labels on ethnic groups. For example, rather than categorizing a person as Asian American or Hispanic American, use more specific labels that identify their nation or region of origin, such as Japanese American or Mexican American.

This is a sensitive topic and should be treated with respect to an individual's personal preferences. Avoid making assumptions about racial or ethnic identity based on appearance as well as using words that reinforce stereotypes.

- Do not mention a person's race unless relevant.
- Forgo stereotypes (even those considered positive) and never use derogatory language.
- Do not generalize all members of a group.

Underrepresented vs. Minority

The general phrases *underrepresented* or *members of underrepresented groups* are both appropriate and are preferred when you are not able to be specific and accurate. An example of an appropriate reference would be, "The goal of this scholarship is to provide financial support to students identifying with underrepresented groups."

On the other hand, the term *minority* centers people in the majority, usually white people. It does not account for when groups considered minorities are in fact the majority in comparison to their counterparts. We do not recommend using this term, as it is a form of racial subordination.

Specific Terms for Groups

- Alaska Native
 - An umbrella term that includes Inuit (Inupiaq and Yupik), Alaskan Indians (Athabaskan, Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian) and Aleut. They are culturally distinct; most prefer to be called *Alaska Native* rather than being grouped as *American Indian*. Note: the term *Eskimo* is controversial and should be used with caution, although some individuals may prefer it.
- Arab, Arabian, Arab American
 - Refers to people from an Arabic-speaking country. Not synonymous with Muslim. Name the specific country being referred to whenever possible (e.g., Lebanese, Saudi, Yemeni, etc.). *Arab* is a noun for a person but can also be used as an adjective (e.g., Arab country). See also *Middle Easterner*.
- Asian, Asian American
 - While *Asian* is a broad term referring to peoples from the continent of Asia, *Asian American* is the proper pan-ethnic term for people in the United States

who come from Asia or descend from people who lived in Asia. Many nationalities and ethnicities fall under this category, including individuals from the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian Subcontinent. In the U.S., it has most often been used to describe East Asians (people from China, Japan, Korea, etc.). When possible, it is best to refer to a specific country, nationality or ethnicity. Reducing a whole continent for brevity's sake erases people's experience and leads to misinterpretation.

- Related terms:
 - Asian Pacific American (APA), Asian Pacific Islander (API), Asian American Pacific Islander (AAP), Asian American Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA).
- African American, Black
 - Both terms are generally acceptable, though individuals may have a strong preference for one or the other. It is best to ask when appropriate, as the terms are not always interchangeable. There are numerous social and historical reasons why a person might choose to identify as African American or Black. Note that *African American* is an ethnicity that specifically relates to people in the U.S. who share a lineage that can be traced directly or indirectly to Africa.
 - *Black people* is the more inclusive term, which denotes a shared sense of identity and experience related to skin color without narrowing the gender to “women” or “men.” Collectively, Black people encompass a wide variety of countries, languages, cultures and ethnicities. Do not pluralize the term (e.g., Blacks). Following Associated Press guidelines, we recommend capitalizing Black.
 - Related terms and groups include but are not limited to *African Immigrants*, *Afro-Caribbean* and *Afro-Latin*.
- BIPOC
 - An acceptable term for *Black, Indigenous and people of color* (including Latin, Asian and other cultures) when speaking generally about this group, but not when referring specifically to one group. The term is meant to unite all people of color, while acknowledging that Black and Indigenous people face different and often more severe forms of racial oppression and cultural erasure as consequences of systemic white supremacy and colonialism. Use BIPOC as a noun, not an adjective.
 - BIWOC is an acceptable term for *Black women, Indigenous women and women of color*. Please note, this term is not universally embraced. If a person asks not to be referred to in this manner, it is always best to respect their preference.
 - Avoid the term *nonwhite*, as it treats whiteness as the default.
 - Related terms: *person of color* or *people of color* (POC).
- Brown
 - This term should be used with care. *Brown* has been used to describe a disparate range of people, including Latin, Indigenous, Asian, Middle Eastern and North African. The meaning is often unclear to readers because

interpretation of the term is variable. Some suggest capitalizing Brown in the same way as Black. Many people who identify with dual- or more-heritage may also identify with the term Brown. The Associated Press suggests, “Avoid this broad and imprecise term in racial, ethnic or cultural references unless as part of a direct quotation.” Whenever possible, a more specific description is best.

- Hispanic, Latin, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Latin@, Latine
 - *Hispanic* refers to persons of Spanish-speaking origin or ancestry, while *Latin* refers to anyone of Latin American origin or ancestry (e.g., Brazilians are Latin but not Hispanic). *Latino* applies to men, boys and mixed-gender groups (e.g., the Latino community). *Latina* applies to women and girls.
 - *Latinx* (pronounced la-TEEN-ex or lat-in-X) is a gender-inclusive description for people of Latin American descent who live in the U.S. *Latin@* is a post-internet construction that simplifies Latina/Latino. Similarly, *Latine* (pronounced la-TEEN-eh) is a gender-inclusive alternative to Latinx. There is some debate about the use of Latinx within the Latino community (A Pew Research study found that only 3% of Hispanics in the U.S. identify with the term Latinx). This is a rapidly evolving area of language, so always seek a person’s preference when possible.
 - Related terms:
 - *Chicana/o, Cubana/o, Dominicana/o, Guatemalteca/o, Mexican American, Mesoamerican Indigenous, Puerto Rican, Puertorriqueño.*
 - Personalization in Latin culture is important to establish trust when forming healthy relationships. Honor a person’s preference and respect the many cultural and historical differences that comprise the Hispanic and Latin community.
 - *Latin America* refers to a distinct geographic region. When describing people who have descended from this region, the term *Latin American* is generally considered interchangeable with *Latino*, though the latter has become more common in recent years.
- Middle Easterner
 - A person or descendant from the Middle East. These countries include Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Northern Cyprus, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The following countries are not considered part of the Middle East but are rather referred to as the Greater Middle East: Afghanistan, Algeria, Djibouti, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Tunisia.
- Mixed-Race, Multiracial, Biracial
 - *Biracial* refers to people of two races; *multiracial* refers to people of two or more racial background. Other terms include *multiethnic* and *polyethnic*. Use *mixed* and *mixed-race* with caution, as some people find these terms offensive.

- Native American, American Indian
 - Refers to a member of any of the Indigenous peoples of the United States. *Native American* is generally acceptable within the U.S. *American Indian* is also a common term and preference for Indigenous people but should never be used automatically or interchangeably due to its origin from racial misconceptions during the colonization of the Americas. When using a term in reference to someone, be cognizant of the individual's preference. Millions of people identify as Native American or having Indigenous ancestry. Avoid simply using *Native* as a noun. Use Native American when referring to two or more individuals of different tribal affiliation. Identify people by their preferred tribal affiliation whenever possible.
 - The terms *Indigenous* and *Aboriginal* should always be capitalized. *Aboriginal* means people living in a region "from the earliest time" and is most closely associated with the Indigenous peoples of Australia. *Indigenous* is an umbrella term that describes any group of people native to a specific region and should not be considered interchangeable with Native American (e.g., *the Indigenous people of Canada*). People who identify as Indigenous constitute a variety of races and ethnicities. In the U.S., tribal membership or citizenship denotes Indigenous identity; however, many Native American and Indigenous groups within the U.S. are not federally recognized due to the displacement and legislative impacts of colonization.
- Native Hawaiian
 - Known as *Kanaka Maoli* in Hawaiian, *Native Hawaiians* and their descendants trace their lineage and language to Polynesians, including Tahitians, Maoris and Samoans.
- Pacific Islander
 - Individuals who identify or descend from the Pacific Islands or ancestry. The three major sub-regions include Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia. The U.S. Census uses the term in reference to one of eight groups: Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Northern Mariana Islander, Palauan, Samoan, Tahitian and Tonga Pilipino.
- Persian
 - Refers to people of Iran as well as the Farsi language; *Persians* are Iranians who speak Farsi. Not all Iranians are Persians, but all Persians are Iranians, nationally. Some designate Persian people as a pan-ethnic group (like the Arab people). However, many Iranians use Persian to make a geographic rather than ethnic distinction. If unclear, describe someone from Iran as Iranian.
- Roma, Romany, Romani
 - A traditionally itinerant ethnic group, who live mostly in Europe. Branches of the ethnic group also live in the Americas, Asia and North Africa. They are

often called *Gypsies* (or *Gipsies*), but this term should be avoided as it has negative connotations, and many Roma do not identify with it.

- white
 - People who share a lineage that can be traced directly or indirectly to Europe. Avoid using the outdated misnomer *Caucasian* (a term which has roots in the Eugenics movement). There is much debate surrounding the capitalization of white. The capitalization of white is often associated with hate groups and white supremacists; therefore, caution should be exercised when considering usage. The Associated Press does not capitalize white. We recommend following their guidelines.

Sex, Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Like race and ethnicity, sex and gender are complex and sensitive topics. Best practices in terms of writing about sex and gender are constantly evolving. Below are some general guidelines toward distinguishing between *sex*, *gender*, *gender identity* and *sexual orientation*:

- Sex
 - A label assigned at birth, most often male or female, historically constructed to indicate an individual's anatomy and gender. *Intersex* is an umbrella term that describes people born with a combination of chromosomes, hormones and/or anatomy that cannot be categorized by male or female labels (e.g., a person may be born with genitals or internal sex organs that fall outside the male/female binary).
- Gender
 - A social construct and social identity that encompasses an individual's attitudes, feelings, behaviors, characteristics and expressions. Terms that may be used to describe a person's gender include *man/male/masculine*, *woman/female/feminine*, *trans* or *transgender*, *cisgender*, *nonbinary*, *agender*, *gender non-conforming*, *gender fluid* and *genderqueer*. These terms can coexist or overlap. An individual's pronouns can often but not always correlate to gender.
- Gender Identity
 - An internal, deeply held sense of one's gender. This may be male, female, a combination of both, fluid or neither. It begins very early in life. A person's gender identity is not always obvious, though it may manifest through clothing, behavior and personal appearance. An individual's pronouns can often but not always correlate to gender identity.
- Sexual Orientation
 - An inherent or externally immutable and enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Sexual orientation is not the same as, and is independent of, gender identity.

When writing about sexual identity/sexuality/sexual orientation, it is important to acknowledge that sexuality and gender are different and in fact have very little to do with each other. Do not assume a person's sex or gender and do not equate these individual aspects with each other or with any particular sexual orientation. Remain critical of when it is relevant or necessary to mention someone's gender or sex. Always get explicit permission before sharing this information publicly or broadly.

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Be careful in all communications that you are not implicitly or explicitly perpetuating sexism and stereotypes. While it is important to respect a person's preferences, it is never appropriate to ask an individual about their anatomy.

Useful Terms by Category

Sexual Orientation

- Asexual
 - A person who does not experience sexual attraction or an intrinsic desire to have sexual relationships.
- Bisexual
 - A person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.
- Gay
 - A person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex. Men, women and nonbinary people may use this term to describe themselves. The term *homosexual* is considered outdated and even offensive.
- Heterosexual
 - A person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to the opposite sex. Often used interchangeably with *straight*.
- Lesbian
 - A woman who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women. Women and nonbinary people may use this term to describe themselves.
- Pansexual, omnisexual
 - Someone whose primary attraction is to a person, regardless of their gender. The terms *heterosexual* and *gay/lesbian* imply gender; therefore, it is often difficult for nonbinary individuals to identify with these labels.

Gender Identity

- AFAB, AMAB
 - Acronyms used for *assigned female at birth* and *assigned male at birth*; use “assigned at birth” instead of “biological sex” or “born a girl.”

- Agender
 - A person who identifies as neither male nor female. It is best to ask people who identify as agender which pronouns they use.
- Assigned gender
 - The gender that a person is identified as at birth, usually based on anatomy.
- Cisgender, cis
 - People who identify with their assigned gender. Often used interchangeably with *gender normative*.
- Deadname, deadnaming
 - Nonbinary and transgender individuals, among others, often adopt new names to better fit their identities. Never call a person by their previous name, known as a *deadname*. *Deadnaming* someone is akin to calling them a slur and can trigger feelings of gender dysphoria and often cause trauma-related insecurities to resurface.
- Gender-affirming care
 - Any procedure that changes a person's body to align with their gender identity. When writing about medical care is appropriate and not objectifying, terms like *gender-affirming care* or *transition-related care* will usually suffice. General language is usually better than more specific terms that draw unnecessary attention to trans bodies and medical procedures.
- Gender dysphoria
 - A person's deep dissatisfaction, anxiety or distress about the disparity between their gender identity and assigned gender. Not all transgender people have dysphoria. Avoid the outdated phrase *gender identify disorder*.
- Gender expression
 - External manifestations of gender. These may be expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, hairstyle, behavior, voice or other perceived characteristics. Transgender people's gender expression often matches their gender identity, but gender expression does not always fit society's defined roles of masculine or feminine.
- Gender fluid
 - A wider, more flexible range of gender expression. If a person identifies as gender fluid, their identity may change in the long term, or even from day to day. It is best to ask people who are gender fluid which pronouns they use.
- Gender nonconforming
 - A term used to describe people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. Not all gender nonconforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender nonconforming. The term is not a synonym for transgender and should only be used if someone specifically identifies as gender nonconforming. It is best to ask gender nonconforming people which pronouns they use.

- Genderqueer
 - A term used by people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as somewhere between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. It is not a synonym for transgender and should only be used if someone self-identifies as genderqueer. It is best to ask genderqueer people which pronouns they use.
- Intersex
 - An umbrella term that describes people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that cannot be classified as typically male or female. These variations are sometimes referred to as *differences of sex development* (DSD). Intersex people can be any gender, including transgender or gender nonbinary, but the terms should not be conflated.
- Multigender
 - A person who identifies as two or more genders. People who identify as two genders sometimes refer to themselves as *bigender*. It is best to ask multigender people which pronouns they use.
- Nonbinary, non-binary
 - An umbrella term for people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary of man and woman. Some transgender people consider themselves nonbinary, while others do not. It is best to ask nonbinary people which pronouns they use.
 - Some Indigenous communities and other cultures use the term *two-spirit* or *third gender* in reference to gender variance.
- Openly, out
 - The term *openly* may imply that identifying as transgender or queer is inherently shameful; use only when relevant (e.g., “She is the first openly gay president.”)
 - *Outing* is when someone’s identity is revealed against their knowledge or will.
- Pregnant women, pregnant people
 - While *pregnant women* is acceptable phrasing, *pregnant people* is increasingly used in medical contexts and is also acceptable for people who have those experiences but do not identify as women, such as some transgender men and some nonbinary people.
- SOGI
 - Increasingly popular acronym for *sexual orientation and gender identity*; typically, spelling out these terms in full is preferable.
- Transgender
 - Refers to individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression may not match their physical, sexual characteristics or sex assigned at birth. Not all transgender people seek gender affirming care, and not all match their gender identity with their gender expression. Sometimes shortened as *trans*.

- Do not use transgender as a noun; use *transgender people/person*, *transgender man* or *transgender woman*. Transgender people may use a number of terms to describe themselves. Use the name and personal pronouns that are consistent with how the individual lives publicly. It is best to ask transgender people which pronouns they use.
- Transition
 - The process of aligning gender expression with gender identity. *Transitioning* is different for every transgender person. Some make social changes (e.g., using a different name and pronouns or wearing different clothes). Some use hormone therapy to change themselves physically and emotionally. Some choose gender-affirming surgery. Many choose a combination.
 - Transitioning may be public or private depending on the individual's preferences. As always, respect their choices. Transgender and non-binary individuals often experience inappropriate questions related to their sex assigned at birth or anatomy when discussing transitioning. Be mindful of this when discussing this topic.

Gender Neutral Language

Gender neutral language should be considered the standard in all messaging and communications. Avoid the use of gender-binary constructions (e.g., *ladies and gentlemen* or *men and women*). These terms and phrases imply the existence of and propagate the idea of a gender binary, excluding individuals who are nonbinary, gender nonconforming, agender or otherwise identify outside of cis-normative constructions of gender.

Use “different sex” instead of “opposite sex,” as this recognizes gender is a spectrum. Use the gender-neutral terms *alum* or *alumni* instead of *alumnus* or *alumna*, unless the individual has a strong preference. Use gender-neutral titles, such as *chairperson* instead of *chairman*, unless the individual has a strong preference. Avoid prefixes like Mr., Mrs. and Ms. Use “caregiver” or “parent” instead of “mother” or “father.”

Many common terms are already gender-neutral—students, faculty, staff, peers, community, coworkers, individuals, collaborators, parents, colleagues and researchers. Avoid adding unnecessary gender modifiers to such words (e.g., female students).

If the use of gendered language is appropriate, terms like *woman* and *man* are more inclusive and preferred; *male* and *female* are indicative of sex, not gender. If specifically referring to sex (e.g., in the context of a medical study), male and female can be appropriate.

Pronouns

Pronouns are an element of language that are used to identify ourselves apart from our name. They are a simple way to affirm a person's identity. Think of using someone's correct pronouns in the same way you would want to pronounce their name correctly.

Individuals may use she/her, he/him, they/them, a combination of pronouns (e.g., she/they) or other neopronouns (e.g., xe/xem/xyr). Always honor a person's pronouns. If you are not clear which pronouns to use, ask the person what pronouns they use. Sharing your own pronouns is a great way to start an introduction. You might say, "Hello! My name is Samantha, and my pronouns are she/her. What pronouns do you use?"

If you are unsure of a person's pronouns, the best option is to use the person's name. Some individuals may even request that you not use any pronouns at all when referring to them. If a person's gender is hypothetical or unknown, default to the gender-neutral *they*, which is commonly used and recognized by language institutions as a singular pronoun.

Avoid phrases like *preferred* or *chosen pronouns*, as these suggest a person's identity is a preference. Avoid phrases like, "She identifies as queer" or "He identifies as trans." This language implies that these identities are a choice or an option. Use phrases like, "She is queer" or "He is trans."

If you make a mistake and misgender someone, simply apologize and move on. It is normal to sometimes struggle with using people's pronouns correctly, especially when individual preferences may change over time. Over-apologizing or explaining your struggle with someone's pronouns is self-serving and may make a situation worse. Be empathetic, mindful and patient when learning about a person's identity.

Notes on LGBTQ+ Terminology

LGBTQ+ is an umbrella term that can describe communities, rights, literature, studies, etc. These acronyms are evolving, and it is not uncommon for additional letters to be added that represent other groups.

- LGBT—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender
- LGBTQ+—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, plus additional identities)
- GLBT—gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender
- LGBTQIA—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/agender
- LGBTQIA2S—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/agender, two-spirit

Always use the plural form (e.g., LGBTQ+ communities or individuals). Do not use as a noun when referring to people (e.g., "She is LGBTQ+"). Because LGBTQ+ refers to a broad collective, it is best to use specific language whenever possible.

Queer is also used as an umbrella term in some contexts, but it is not universally accepted and should be used with caution. Always ask which term is applicable and comfortable for the group or person to whom you're referring.

Ability

Ability refers to physical, mental and chronological attributes. The community of people with disabilities is inclusive and intersectional. People with disabilities represent about one out of every four U.S. adults and 15% of the overall global population. Disabilities can exist at birth or can be developed later in life. Any person can be impacted on a physical, emotional, behavioral, learning, intellectual or psychological level at any time.

Disabilities can profoundly affect a person's mobility, mental health, cognition, communication, hearing, vision, occupation, education, social relationships and more. Many people with disabilities face societal barriers and stigma that compound their conditions. Therefore, it is important to remember that disability is one of many identity groups and that people with disabilities contribute to diversity.

Dedicate time to researching and understanding specific conditions or disabilities before writing about them. Avoid ableist language that devalues disability. We should strive to represent members of the disabled community in a respectful and authentic way.

A note about person-first language: While we typically encourage the use of person-first language, many people with disabilities prefer identity-first language. Rather than defaulting to person-first language, it is always best to confirm an individual's preference. Read more about the differences between person-first and identity-first language below.

Person-First Language

Person-first language avoids defining a person in terms of their disability. Generally, this entails placing the reference to the disability after the reference to a person (e.g., *people with disabilities* or *a member of the Deaf community*). This emphasizes that the person is more important than the disability.

Language that connotes weakness or pity should be avoided (e.g., *afflicted with* or *suffers from*; *confined* or *bound to a wheelchair*). Also avoid language that denotes judgment (e.g., use *significant* instead of *severe*). Use language that states the facts in neutral terms. Also be mindful of the tendency to portray people with disabilities as objects of inspiration. These depictions can ultimately distort understanding of disabilities, perpetuate negative stereotypes and raise false expectations for people with disabilities.

Identity-First Language

Some groups may prefer *identity-first language*, meaning that the disability is listed first because individuals feel it is central to their experience. For example, someone may prefer "autistic student" instead of "student who is autistic." When appropriate, the best practice is to ask how an individual or group identifies.

Useful Terms

- Ableism
 - Prejudiced thoughts, attitudes and/or discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental and/or emotional ability.

- Able-bodied, able-bodied
 - A term used to describe someone who does not identify as having a disability. Some people regard this term as offensive because it centers ableism. The term *non-disabled* or the phrase *does not have a disability* are more neutral choices.
- Accessible, accessibility
 - The opportunity to access programs, services and facilities for people with disabilities; the extent to which a facility is usable and approachable for people with disabilities.
- Accommodation
 - A modification, whether in the classroom or in the workplace, ensuring that people with disabilities can participate in a manner equal to non-disabled individuals.
- Ageism
 - Discrimination based on age. Often manifests as negatively stereotyping older adults or the aging process, but also patronizing or underestimating the abilities of younger people.
- Americans with Disabilities Act
 - Federal civil rights legislation created in 1990 to address discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, public accommodations, transportation and telecommunications, including state and local government services. Abbreviated as ADA.
- Autism, autism spectrum disorders
 - A group of complex disorders related to brain development. Common symptoms include difficulties in communication, impaired social interaction, and/or restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior. These symptoms vary widely across the spectrum.
 - Ask individuals with autism spectrum disorders how they prefer to be described. When in doubt, use person-first language, referring to someone as *a person with autism* rather than *an autistic person*, though some individuals may prefer the latter.
- Blind person, visually impaired person
 - The term *legally blind* denotes a person with 20/200 visual acuity or less. *Blind* or *legally blind* is acceptable for people with almost complete vision loss. Many people with vision loss are not considered blind. The terms *low vision*, *limited vision* or *visually impaired* are recommended for people who do not refer to themselves as blind. It is best to ask the person which terms they use.
- Body weight
 - People of higher weight often experience discrimination or stigma. The terms *obese* and *fat* are generally considered offensive. However, some people of higher weight have reclaimed the word *fat* and use it to self-identify. The terms *higher weight* or *larger body* are more neutral. It is best to respect an individual's preference.

- Cognitive/intellectual disability
 - A disability that involves significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (e.g., reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills.
 - Most intellectual disabilities develop before the age of 18. Congenital disorders, such as Down syndrome, develop before or at birth. Use people-first language, stating that someone is *a person with an intellectual disability* rather than referring to the person as *intellectually disabled*.
- Deaf person, deaf
 - A person with partial or total hearing loss. The Deaf community has its own unique culture and language(s), most notably American Sign Language (ASL). Use lowercase when referring to a hearing-loss condition. Capitalize for those who identify as members of the Deaf community.
 - Note that individuals may have different preferences for capitalization. Deaf should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Use the phrase *hard of hearing* to describe a person with mild to moderate hearing loss. Avoid using the phrase *hearing impaired* in favor of *deaf* or *hard of hearing*.
- Disability, disabled
 - Generally, *disability* describes functional limitations that affect one or more major life activities, such as walking, lifting, learning or breathing. Disability and people who have disabilities are not monolithic; even the term “disability” is not universally accepted, so be mindful of individual preference. Avoid describing a person as *handicapped* or *differently-abled*.
 - When describing individuals, do not reference disabilities unless it is pertinent to the story. When possible, refer to a person’s specific condition.
- Hidden/invisible disability
 - A non-obvious condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- Mental illness, mental disorder
 - An umbrella term for many different conditions that affect how individuals act, think, feel or perceive the world (e.g., anxiety disorder, mood disorder, schizophrenia). Be specific and use person-first language when describing people with mental illness/disorder (e.g., *He has bipolar disorder* rather than *He is bipolar*). Do not refer to someone as *mentally ill*.
 - When describing individuals, do not reference mental illness/disorders unless it is pertinent to the story. When possible, refer to a person’s specific condition.
- Neurodiverse
 - A term used to describe people of atypical developmental, intellectual and cognitive abilities. Most often used to describe people who have autism or other developmental differences. Related terms include *neuroatypical* and *neurodivergent*.

- Neurotypical
 - A term used to describe people of typical developmental, intellectual and cognitive abilities.
- Person with a disability/people with disabilities
 - An umbrella term that represents people-first language; it foregrounds the person, not the disability.
- Sanism, mentalism
 - Discrimination against a mental trait or condition a person has or is judged to have.
- Substance use disorder
 - A disease that affects a person’s brain and behavior, leading to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal medication or drug. Avoid the phrases *addicted to drugs* or *drug addict*. It is best to use person-first language such as *person with an addiction*.
- Suicide
 - Approach the topic of suicide with care and compassion. Avoid language that sensationalizes or normalizes suicide such as *failed attempt*, which depicts suicide as a goal or solution.
 - Avoid the term *commit/committed suicide*. Instead, use *died/death by suicide* or *lost their life to suicide*. Avoid statements like, “She is suicidal.” Instead, use, “She has experienced suicidal thoughts/ideation.”

Faith and Religion

There are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide. Faith and spirituality are often a major part of a person’s identity. With such a diverse spectrum of religions, it is important to educate ourselves and respect the practices of different faiths. People who practice various religions often face persecution for their beliefs.

Avoid derogatory stereotypes of individuals, groups and nationalities in terms of religious affiliation. Unless relevant to communications, it is generally best to not cite a person’s religion. Be sure to consult with a person about how they identify and whether it is relevant to a story or text. Treat people like human beings instead of blanket representations of religious or ethnic groups.

Avoid politically charged words like *extremist*, *militant*, *radical* or *fundamentalist*. Other words to avoid include *cult* or *sect* for their negative connotations, as well as *devout* or *pious* for their subjectivity.

Useful Terms

- Affirming congregation
 - Congregations, usually Christian churches, which welcome LGBTQ+ people.

- Agnostic
 - Someone who is unsure whether there is a God or who believes it is unknowable whether God exists. Not to be confused with *atheist*.
- Anti-Semitism
 - Prejudice against people of Jewish heritage.
- Atheist
 - A person who does not believe in God or other deities.
- Halal
 - Lawful foods, objects and activities sanctioned by Islamic teaching. Also refers to foods that are permissible for Muslims to eat and drink.
- Hijab
 - Generally used to describe the scarf many women who are Muslims use to cover their head.
- Interfaith
 - Refers to activities or events that draw people from entirely different religious traditions.
- Islamophobia
 - Fear and prejudice against Muslims.
- Kosher
 - In Judaism, refers to ritually pure food prepared in accordance with Jewish dietary laws. Lowercase in all references; *kosher* is an adjective.
- Quran
 - Pronounced “ku-RAHN.” The holy book of Islam. Avoid spelling as *Koran*.

Immigration Status, National Identity and Language Proficiency

National identity is loosely defined as a sense of identity or belonging to one or more states and/or nations. Do not confuse national identity with ethnic or religious identity. It is important to remember that a country’s territory encompasses people of different ethnicities and religions. Many people have multiple national identities, while conceptions of national identity differ around the world. It is always best to defer to how the individual wishes to be identified in terms of national identity.

Citizenship is also a sensitive issue. Immigrants and refugees frequently face discrimination. They are often dehumanized, criminalized and/or vilified, without regard to the circumstances which led them to leave their countries, as well as the barriers they face in seeking asylum and/or citizenship. Inclusive language around immigration should affirm and acknowledge the legitimacy of everyone as human beings, regardless of citizenship. Instead of referring to people who are not U.S. citizens as *aliens* or *illegal aliens*, use the adjective *undocumented*.

English language proficiency should also be treated with empathy and understanding. English is one of the most challenging languages for non-native speakers to master. Understand that not everyone has the same level of proficiency and should be treated with

respect regardless of their native language. The phrases *English as a second language*, *emerging bilingual* and *English language learner* are considered inadequate and outdated. The preferred phrasing is *English in addition to other languages*. Other appropriate examples include, “She speaks Spanish and is learning English,” or, “Spanish is her first language.”

Useful Terms

- Codeswitching
 - Shifting between two or more different languages, dialects, accents or modes of speaking; modifying one’s behavior or appearance to adapt to different situations or be accepted by different groups.
- Immigrant
 - Person who moves to another country, usually for permanent residence. They may or may not be citizens.
- Non-immigrants
 - People who are in the country but only on a temporary basis, including students (F-1 visa); business visitors or tourists (B1/B2 visas); fiancées (K-1 visa); and individuals granted temporary protected status.
- Permanent or Conditional Residents
 - Legal permanent residents (LPRs) have a “green card.” They have authorization to permanently live and work in the U.S. Green card holders have all the benefits of citizenship except voting.
- Refugees, asylum
 - A person or group of people who leave or seek assistance for leaving their country of origin to another nation due to largescale conflict or disaster. Individuals are often at imminent or immediate risk to their safety and livelihoods. Receiving nations can grant federal status of protection known as *asylum*.
- Undocumented
 - People who are in the U.S. without permission are considered undocumented. They have either overstayed a legal temporary visa or they have entered the U.S. without going through a legal port of entry. They are not authorized to work or access public benefits. Undocumented individuals risk deportation, which can create a highly stressful and unstable living situation.
- U.S. Citizens
 - People who are born in the U.S. or who have become “naturalized” after being permanent residents.
- Xenophobia
 - Fear and/or prejudice against people from other countries.

Glossary of General Terms

- Ally
 - A person who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with

oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

- Anti-racist
 - The practice of actively identifying and opposing racism. The goal of anti-racism is to actively change policies, behaviors and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.
- Active bystander
 - A person who intervenes to address inappropriate or harmful behavior, language or situations.
- Belonging
 - A sense of fitting in or feeling you are accepted by a group; feeling valued and respected by others in a workplace, group or society. This term is frequently associated with diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, and they are sometimes abbreviated together as DEIB.
- Bias
 - A subjective opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination—often without reasonable justification or awareness—that influences an individual’s ability to evaluate something or someone accurately and objectively. See also *unconscious bias, implicit bias*.
- Color blind
 - The belief in treating everyone “equally” by treating everyone the same; based on the presumption that differences are by definition bad or problematic, and therefore best ignored (e.g., “I don’t see race, gender, etc.”). Telling someone, “I don’t see race or color,” even if well-intentioned, is problematic because it fails to acknowledge the reality of a person’s experience.
- Cultural competence
 - A person’s ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures.
- Discrimination
 - Actions based on conscious or unconscious prejudice that favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services and opportunities. The unequal treatment of people based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical/mental ability, religion and/or other categories.
- Equality
 - Ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives; believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born.
- Equity
 - Working toward fair outcomes for people or groups by treating them in ways that address their unique advantages or barriers.

- Hate crime
 - A crime motivated by actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation of any person.
- Inclusion
 - Creating involvement, environments and empowerment in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to fully participate; embracing differences and offering respect in words and actions for all people.
- Institutional racism, systemic racism
 - The ways institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups, including those historically designed and enacted to enforce disparity.
- Micro-aggression
 - Commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory slights based on race, gender, etc.
- Racial profiling
 - The use of race or ethnicity as grounds for suspecting someone of having committed an offense.
- Safe space
 - Refers to an environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule or denial of experience.
- Tokenism
 - Hiring or seeking to have representation based on race, gender, etc. in a deliberate effort to appear inclusive while remaining mono-cultural.
- Unconscious bias, implicit bias
 - Social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs to a degree.
- White fragility
 - A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress become intolerable for white people, triggering a range of defensive moves, such as argumentation, silence or leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors function to reinstate white racial equilibrium.
- White privilege
 - The unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed upon people solely because they are white, separate from one's level of income or effort.
- White supremacy
 - A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and individuals of color based on the

purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege for white individuals and groups.

Appendix

Attribution

When excerpting or quoting material from this guide, please make attributions to the Hood College Division of Community and Inclusivity.

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Additional Resources

The Diversity Style Guide

<https://www.diversitystyleguide.com>

The Associated Press Stylebook

<https://www.apstylebook.com>

Linguistic Society of America – Guidelines for Inclusive Language

<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/guidelines-inclusive-language>

Conscious Style Guide

<https://consciousstyleguide.com>

National Center on Disability and Journalism – Disability Language Guide

<https://ncdj.org/style-guide>

NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists Stylebook

<https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/terminology>

GLAAD Media Reference Guide

<https://www.glaad.org/reference>

Anti-Racism in Academia

<https://ariajourney.org/act/inclusive-language>