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Fighting Talk

Today

- **What inclusive language is**
- **Why inclusive language matters**
- **10 practical tips**

What inclusive language is

People often say

Inclusive language does not:

- discriminate.
- cause harm.
- perpetuate stereotypes.

What *does* inclusive language do?

- Accurately describe reality.
- Points to structural causes.
- Empowers people to describe themselves.

Why language matters

Language affects:

- Memory
- Perception
- Belief
- Action

Many experiences of discrimination and oppression happen through language.

“The bad news is that your language probably reflects the transphobic values of the culture you live in. But the good news is that changing your language can also help to change those cultural values.”

- Lal Zimman

The bad news is that your language probably reflects systems of oppression.

The good news is that changing your language can also help to challenge those systems.



✗ Questioned

✓ Encouraged

Avoid euphemism

- ✗ Chris plays for the other team, is a confirmed bachelor, friend of Dorothy.
- ✓ Chris is gay.

✗ Differently-abled, handi-capable, special needs.

✓ Disabled.

Be specific

✗ We're celebrating BAME stories during Black History Month.

✓ We're celebrating Black history.

Be factual

✗ Ash is confined to a wheelchair.

✓ Ash uses a wheelchair.

✗ Kelly is afflicted with Parkinson's.

✓ Kelly has Parkinson's.

✗ Ron suffered a stroke.

✓ Ron had/survived a stroke.

**LGBTQIA+ inclusive
language**

Not everyone is a man or a woman.

✗ Ladies and gentlemen.

✓ Colleagues, team, folks, you, all, good morning everyone.

Not everyone is a heterosexual man or a woman.

✗ Husbands and wives.

✓ Partners, spouses, plus ones, people you're dating.

LGBTQIA+ is an umbrella term.
Be as specific as possible.



Having to “come out” can be scary and exhausting.

✗ What does your wife do for a living?

✓ Do you have a partner? What do they do?

Use singular they. You already know how!

- ✓ Someone called for you. They didn't leave their name.
- ✓ My bike got stolen. I hope they get a flat tire.
- ✓ Staff should fill out their appraisals by Friday.

Sexual orientation is an enduring part of our identities.

✗ Sexual preferences.

✓ Sexual orientation, sexuality.

Try not to guess gender.

✓ I'll take a question from the person in the red shirt.

Need to know how to describe someone? Ask.

✓ “So that I can introduce you before you speak on the panel, can I check how you’d like me to refer to you?”

Pronouns ≠ gender.

Sharing your pronouns helps to:

- make it easier for other people to come out,
- decentre the assumption that everyone is CisHet.

⚠️ Being “out” is a choice. It’s not safe for everyone.

They're not “preferred” or “chosen” pronouns.

If someone uses the pronouns “she/her”, then her pronouns are “she/her.”

Think of pronouns as being like names:

- You can't guess them from looking.
- There are lots of them, not just two.
- It's not up to others to decide yours.
- Getting it wrong isn't the worst thing, so long as it's handled well.

✓ Mirror people's words.

If they say husband, girlfriend, boyfriend etc, say what they say.

⚠️ Watch out for reclaimed slur words.

Not everyone agrees on whether it's okay to say queer, for example.

Ask people

✅ Over 90% of autistic people in the UK use identity-first language.

Person first language

- They have autism.
- She has a disability.
- You have vision loss.

Identity first language

- They are autistic.
- She is disabled.
- You are blind/low vision.

- Not everybody agrees.
- That's okay!

Ask people

Most of the time, we don't need to talk **about** people.

There's no need to comment on your new colleague:

- Having a stutter,
- Using a wheelchair,
- Having vitiligo.

Ask people

But if you do need to talk about somebody, ask them what language they prefer.

It's better to ask, than to guess and get it wrong.

We often worry it's rude to ask people about their identity.

It's not, so long as:

1. There's a **clear reason** for asking,
2. We're **polite and professional**,
3. We **listen and respect** what they tell us.

Explain why you're asking. Don't put them on the spot.

✗ What are you?

✓ So that I can introduce you accurately, can I check how you'd like me to describe you / what language you prefer?

**Impact matters more
than intent**



How to apologise

How to correct a mistake

Everyone says things they don't mean. That's okay!

You can:

1. **Acknowledge.**
2. **Apologise** (only you can keep the apology brief and sincere).
3. **Avoid** repeating the mistake.

Take action

Share what you learn

You could say:

“I used to say _ too. I recently learned _, and now I say _ instead.”

“I noticed you said _. Just so you know _.”



February 22, 2023

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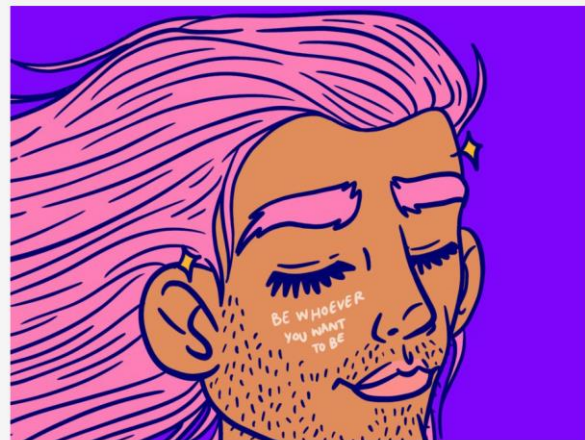


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By Ettie Bailey-King · Launched a year ago

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