



7th edition

**APA
STYLE**

Brief Guide to Bias-Free and Inclusive Language

APA provides science-backed guidance on writing about people with dignity and respect. Start with the general principles for avoiding bias in language and cultivating an inclusive mindset; then apply those principles to describe specific personal characteristics. For more details, read the [bias-free language guidelines](#) and the [Inclusive Language Guide \(2nd ed.\)](#).

General Principles for Avoiding Bias

1. Describe people at the appropriate level of specificity. Focus on relevant characteristics.
2. Be sensitive to labels. Call people what they call themselves. Avoid derogatory language.



An Inclusive Mindset

- Don't make assumptions. Everyone has a unique perspective.
- Impact matters more than intention. Listen to others.
- Don't expect perfection. Do your best to be inclusive.

Topic	Guideline	Preferred examples	Problematic examples
Age	Show aging is a normal part of the human experience, separate from disease and disorder.	older adults, adults aged 65 and older	senior citizens, the elderly
Disability	Use person-first or identity-first language according to the preferences of the person/group. Avoid euphemistic and fatalistic language.	disabled person or person with a disability, autistic person, blind person, Deaf or hard-of-hearing person, wheelchair user, person with Down syndrome	"special needs," wheelchair-bound, stroke victim, hearing-impaired person
Gender	Use gender-inclusive language and self-identified pronouns. Avoid assuming a gender binary.	singular "they" for a generic person, gender-neutral occupational terms	"he or she" for a generic person, gendered occupational terms
Race and ethnicity	Ask people to self-identify if possible because the concept of race is not universal. Capitalize "Black" and "White."	Asian, people of color, Black, White, Hispanic, Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine, MENA, Native American	Caucasian (racist origins; use "White" or "European American" instead)
Sexual orientation	Use the umbrella terms "sexual orientation and gender diversity" and "sexual and gender minorities."	LGBTQ, gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual, lesbian, queer (and other identities)	homosexual (perpetuates stereotypes; use "gay" instead)
Socioeconomic status	Emphasize what people have, not what they lack.	people experiencing homelessness, people whose income is [define]	the homeless, the poor



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION © 2025

Last updated June 25, 2025

More information on APA Style can be found in the [Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association \(7th ed.\)](#) and the [Concise Guide to APA Style \(7th ed.\)](#).

CITE THIS HANDOUT:

American Psychological Association. (2025). *Brief guide to bias-free and inclusive language*. <https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/inclusive-language.pdf>