

Guidelines for Inclusive Language

Introduction

Overview

The Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC) is committed to creating and maintaining a culture of inclusion, respect, and support for all people. As part of its commitment to broadening the institution's understanding of inclusivity and diversity, CMCC has created the *Guidelines for Inclusive Language* to educate the community on inclusive language and support the community in applying inclusive language in its everyday interactions.

Inclusive language is language that is free from words, expressions or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped, stigmatized, or discriminatory views against particular people or groups of people. It fosters respect and a sense of belonging for all individuals by using terminology that does not exclude, demean, or label individuals. Inclusive language ensures that everyone is valued as an equal member of society, regardless of their personal attributes.

As communicators, we recognize that language is a powerful tool. Our use of words and how we choose to express them has the power to reinforce stigma and stereotypes, often unintentionally. Through mindful and respectful choices, members of the CMCC community can incorporate inclusive language into their day-to-day interactions without lessening the effectiveness of their communication.

In creating this *Guidelines for Inclusive Language* document, CMCC has reaffirmed its commitment to an inclusive environment free of discrimination or prejudice of any form by ensuring inclusive language is used by all its constituents in written (including electronic) and oral communication. Students, staff and faculty of CMCC are expected to respect all dimensions of diversity.

Using These Inclusive Guidelines

These Inclusive Guidelines are intended to act as a point of reference for CMCC students, staff and faculty to assist them in identifying appropriate language and to provide practical examples of preferred terms and phrases. It will also assist members of the CMCC community in recognizing and avoiding biased, discriminatory, and prejudiced language. The focus of this Inclusive Guidelines document is not meant to be on the grounds of diversity itself, but rather, on the situations where non-inclusive language may inadvertently be used. For more information on human rights grounds of diversity, definitions and principles, please visit the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#).

These Inclusive Guidelines address language associated with the following grounds of diversity: ability or disability; Aboriginal and Indigenous Peoples; age; gender; gender identity; religion and beliefs; race and ethnicity. This is not to be treated as an exhaustive list. The grounds of diversity are vast and wide-ranging, including, but not limited to: culture, circumstance, race, aboriginality, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, and place of origin.

Language is constantly evolving in response to changes in culture and society as a whole. While CMCC will make every reasonable effort to update this document with the most current and appropriate terminology, this guide should not be treated as definitive or finite.

Inquiries and Support

If you have any questions or wish to discuss how to proceed with inclusive language, please seek advice by using the contact information below:

If you are a student, please contact:	If you are an employee, please contact:
Student Services studentserv@cmcc.ca	Human Resources hradmin@cmcc.ca

Abilities/Disabilities

Overview

Inclusive language focuses on the person's abilities and positive aspects, not their limitations. Disabilities should only be referred to when it is relevant to the context and when the diagnosis has come from a reputable source (for example, a medical professional). If it is appropriate to discuss one's disability, a people-first language approach should be used. In this approach, a person is put first, and their disability is secondary (for example, "a person with autism").

When it is required and appropriate for you to reference a disability, you should always explain the person's disability and not use the term "disabled". Terms/phrases such as "with", "who is/has" and "living with" are useful. For example, "Terrence is a student who has a vision impairment and requires audio description for class." If possible, always ask the person with a disability (or, if relevant, their caregiver) how they would like to be described.

Avoid defining people by their disabilities (e.g., "a schizophrenic", "a handicap") and using neologisms (new or isolated terms that have not been widely accepted or integrated into the mainstream). Also, it is important to remember that disabilities can be visible or invisible; you should not assume someone does not have a disability simply because you cannot see it.

Suggested Language

The following are some common examples of appropriate language:

<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>
The disabled, disabled employees	Persons with disabilities, employees with disabilities
A schizophrenic	A person living with schizophrenia
Victim of, stricken/afflicted with, suffers from, battling	A person who had a stroke, a person who uses a wheelchair, a person living with multiple sclerosis
Hearing impaired	A person who is deaf or hard of hearing

Inclusive language also refers to the avoidance of many phrases that tend to stereotype persons with disabilities, define them by their disabilities, and/or assume a state of inferiority.

The following are a few examples:

Non-Inclusive Phrase(s)	Implied Meaning
“You don’t <i>look</i> like someone who needs a wheelchair.”	This implies a generalization that persons who use a wheelchair look (or should look) a certain way.
“She suffers from cystic fibrosis.”	This implies a generalization that persons with disabilities have a reduced quality of life and are suffering. Just because a person has a disability does not mean they struggle with it.
“He’s absolutely crazy.”	This trivializes mental illness and stigmatizes it as inherently having negative characteristics.

Aboriginal and Indigenous Peoples

Overview

The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal Peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. The term “Aboriginal Peoples” became legalized with the implementation of the Constitution Act, however, the federal government has since moved to also recognize and accept Indigenous Peoples as a synonymous term. In either approach, it is important to maintain the plurality of the word “Peoples” to uphold the inclusivity of the term. For example, using the term “Aboriginal People” or “Indigenous People” does not recognize the individual and diverse identities of the various groups that they encompass. It is also important to capitalize these terms as a form of respect and honour.

Indigenous Peoples come from different nations with separate languages, cultures and customs; they should not be treated as one homogenous group. Some Indigenous persons will only identify by referring to their Nation name in their own language. For example, they may say that they are “Lakota”, “Anishinaabe”, or “Haudenosaunee,” or will identify using the common name used in the dominant language surrounding them, like “Cree,” “Chippewa,” or “Mohawk”.

Colonial references such as “Indian” or “Amerindian” should be avoided when referring to Aboriginal Peoples. Similarly, you should refrain from saying “Canada’s First Nation” or “Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples” as this depicts a state of ownership.

If you can, always ask the person or group you are addressing which term is personally preferred. While one person may prefer a particular term to acknowledge their Indigeneity, that term may be offensive to another individual.

Suggested Language

The following are some common examples of appropriate language:

Instead of	Try
Canada’s First Nations	First Nations of Canada

Natives, Indians, Aboriginals, Eskimo(s)	Indigenous Peoples First Nations, Métis, Inuk (Inuit is plural)
Reserve	Community, ancestry, or home

Inclusive language also refers to the avoidance of phrases or terms that have been appropriated from Indigenous cultures or are discriminatory towards Indigenous Peoples.

The following are a few examples:

Non-Inclusive Phrase(s)	Implied Meaning
“My spirit animal is definitely a sloth.”	Many Indigenous groups have spiritual traditions that incorporate a spirit animal or helper. The use of the term “spirit animal” in a non-Indigenous context (e.g. as a joke or to indicate one’s love for something/someone) is an offensive appropriation of Indigenous cultures and beliefs.
“Let’s have a quick pow-wow!”	Commonly used to talk about having a meeting or get together, this is a cultural appropriation of a significant celebration by many Indigenous communities. Its non-Indigenous reference dilutes its meaning and cultural significance.

Age

Overview

Age-inclusive language should avoid referring to someone’s age, unless relevant and necessary to the context (e.g., age as a contributor in prognosis or diagnosis). It should be reflective and welcoming of all ages and generations. It should recognize individuals for who they are as a person and their individual characteristics, and not draw correlations or assumptions because of their age.

To ensure age-inclusive language, it is important to avoid any form of generalization of a certain age group or generation as this does not recognize their individuality. Similarly, language that stereotypes or implies that a particular age cohort has certain abilities or inabilities, or has stereotypical characteristics because of their age, should also be avoided.

Suggested Language

The following are some common examples of appropriate language:

Instead of	Try
The elderly, the old, pensioners, “boomers”	Mature individual, elderly person/persons
The boys/girls in the office	The colleagues in the office
A young and vibrant team	A vibrant team
A mature workforce	An experienced workforce

Age-inclusive language also refers to the avoidance of many phrases that tend to stereotype age groups to support one's point or convey a message. While seemingly harmless, these phrases often reinforce ageist ideologies and stereotypes.

The following are a few examples:

Non-Inclusive Phrase(s)	Implied Meaning
"It's so simple that even your grandma can do it."	This implies that older individuals have certain inferior skills and abilities.
"Oh wow, you don't <i>look</i> your age!"	This implies a generalization that people of a certain age should look a certain way.
"That's such a millennial thing to say."	This phrase stereotypes a cohort of individuals without any regard for the person's individuality.
"I'm surprised that <i>you're</i> so good on the computer!"	The tone used in this phrase reinforces a stereotype that older generations struggle with computers and technology.
"Great job, kid!" or "Great work, kiddo!"	The term kid is typically used to refer to a child; using this term with an adult can be demeaning and implies a lack of respect because of their younger age.

Gender

Overview

Using gender-inclusive language is the act of speaking and writing in a way that avoids discriminating against or stereotyping people of a certain genders. While the English language is considered to be a gender-neutral language, there are many words (most commonly nouns) that unintentionally perpetuate gender stereotypes by making distinctions by sex. These words and phrases have been so deeply engrained in us that they often go unnoticed. It is increasingly evident that there are negative effects of the ongoing use of gendered language.

Suggested Language

The following are examples of appropriate language:

Instead of	Try
Mankind	Humankind
Man-made	Machine-made, synthetic, or artificial
Policeman	Police officer
Waitresses and waiters	Servers
Salesman/saleswoman	Salesperson or sales representative
Steward/stewardess	Flight attendant

Casual sexism or sexist microaggressions remain common and are often viewed as harmless or joking around. While the intent may not be to demean a particular sex, the outcome of this type of language is often offensive and discriminatory.

The following are examples of non-inclusive phrases as they relate to gender or sex:

Non-Inclusive Phrase(s)	Implied Meaning
“You are so strong/smart/fast for a girl.”	These types of comments perpetuate stereotypes about women that are demeaning and view them as inferior. Women are diverse and have a wide range of strengths and abilities; these phrases fail to recognize their individuality.
“Take it like a man!” or “Man up!”	These phrases enforce stereotypes that men should be strong and never show emotion. These expectations put unrealistic standards on men and create a culture where men do not feel comfortable expressing their emotions.
“Men wouldn’t get it.”	This enforces gender stereotypes against men by implying that they don’t understand something solely on the basis of their gender/sex.
“That’s a woman’s job.”	This enforces gender roles and discriminates against women based on social constructs about a woman’s ‘role’.

Gender Identity

Overview

The previous section’s discussion of gender-neutral language is useful to avoid making assumptions about one’s gender identity. Respecting individuals’ gender identity through language is fundamental in creating a safe and inclusive environment. The gender identity of an individual may not align with social expectations about gender based on one’s anatomy or how they present themselves in their appearance. The gender identity of an individual may also not align with the socially-constructed male/female gender binary nor may it align with the gender they were assigned at birth.

It is best not to assume the gender of an individual or their associated gender nouns/pronoun. You should always ask an individual how they would prefer to be addressed to avoid assumptions, promote respectful relationships, and create an inclusive culture. The best strategies to avoid misgendering someone are to use gender-neutral language and pronouns (e.g., they, them, their) unless that person has informed you of their preferences.

Suggested Language

The following are a few examples of inclusive language:

Instead of	Try
“Hello Miss Smith.”	“Hello. My name is Pat and I go by the pronouns they/them. How may I address you?”
“The man is sitting in the clinic waiting area.”	“The patient is sitting in the clinic waiting area.”

“Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss” on letters, envelopes and email	Remove titles and only use the person’s name to address them.
“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen!”	“Good evening everyone!”
“Guests can attend with their wives.”	“Guests can attend with their partners.”
“This event is open to all mothers and fathers.”	“This event is open to all parents.”

Race and Ethnicity

Overview

Inclusive language should avoid generalizing and stereotyping individuals or groups of individuals based on race or ethnicity. It is recommended to only use a person’s race or ethnicity to identify or describe them if it is relevant to the context. You should avoid identifying or describing people by race, colour, ethnicity, and/or origin if it is not necessary.

If necessary and appropriate to do so, an individual or group of individuals should be described using adjectives instead of nouns (e.g., “Asian people” instead of “Asians”). In addition, you should always use the accepted terminology and language preferred by the individual or group (e.g., Caribbean not West Indian).

It is also important to avoid using words that imply negative assumptions and stereotypes. Some words or terms may be unintentionally derogatory or reinforce existing racial stereotypes.

Suggested Language

The following are a few examples of appropriate language:

Instead of	Try
Blacklist, blackball	Ban, bar, boycott, exclude, ostracize
Blackmark	A negative
Minorities	Racialized communities
Immigrants, foreigners, migrants, aliens	Newcomers, new to Canada
Visible minority	Racialized person, racialized group
Master bedroom	Primary bedroom
Chop, chop	Hurry, quickly
I was gyped.	I was cheated/swindled.
East Indian	Indian, a person from India
West Indian	Caribbean, a person from the Caribbean
The Persian doctor	The doctor

The following are examples of non-inclusive phrases as they relate to race and ethnicity:

Non-Inclusive Phrase(s)	Implied meaning
“You speak well for a minority person.”	This remark is condescending because it assumes all people from ethnic or racial minorities do not speak English well.

“I do not see colour.”	This comment is seemingly progressive, but is actually harmful to equity, diversity and inclusion endeavors because it denies the existence of racial and ethnic inequality.
“Where are you <i>actually/really</i> from?”	Asking where someone is from, especially if they have already provided an answer, uncovers the questioner’s bias. It suggests that the person being questioned cannot be from here and does not <i>really</i> belong. It is an interrogation of the person’s national identity and suggests they do not belong.
“I am not a racist, I have several Latino friends.”	This is comment is typically a defense against accusations of racism. However, having friends, family or significant others who are from races and ethnicities different than your own, does not absolve a person from being, speaking or acting in a racist way. Racism exists regardless of relationships held with others.
Imitating accents	Imitating accents often has a negative or mocking context and perpetuates harmful stigmas and stereotypes about particular races and ethnicities.
“ <i>Those people</i> ” or “ <i>You people</i> ”	These phrases suggest that an individual belongs to a group identity that has been labelled with an undesirable characteristic.

Religion and Beliefs

Overview

Many individuals follow a religion (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Sikhism) or maintain a belief (e.g., atheism, agnosticism, humanism). Inclusive language refers to the use of language that is not affiliated with a particular religion or belief. For example, Christianity is the most adhered to religion in Canada and it is not uncommon for Christian-centric terms or phrases to be used (e.g., “Merry Christmas” during the month of December).

Inclusive language should be free of any reference to one’s religious practice or belief. It should not be referenced unless relevant to the context. For example, if making modifications to a treatment plan to accommodate religious or spiritual beliefs/practices. Note that both terms—religion and belief—are used. Both forms should be officially recognized as an individual may not practice a particular religion, but they may have a religious or philosophical belief.

It is important to recognize the diversity that is present within any religion or belief (e.g., Catholics and Christians). Broad, sweeping statements about any particular religion should be avoided as they generalize all groups and do not recognize their unique practices or beliefs.

Suggested Language

The following are a few examples of inclusive language:

Instead of	Try
God bless you	Bless you
Jewish lawyer	A lawyer
Merry Christmas	Happy Holidays; Season's Greetings
Faith	Religion or belief
Religious discrimination	Discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief

Inclusive language also refers to the avoidance of many phrases or statements that tend to stereotype various groups of individuals based on their religion or belief.

The following are a few examples:

Non-Inclusive Phrase(s)	Implied Meaning
"Don't you wish you could just take your hijab off?"	This phrase stereotypes Muslim women as being oppressed and not having the ability to make the personal choice to wear (or not to wear) a hijab.
"You're an atheist? So what, you don't believe in anything?"	This implies that individuals who do not believe in God, do not believe in anything. It fails to recognize the individual's personal belief choice and attempts to impose their own ideologies onto the person about what is right or ideal.
"You're such a tech guru!"	The word guru is an appropriation from Hindu and Buddhist religions that use the term to refer to a spiritual leader who is highly respected and esteemed. The nonchalant use of the term diminishes its importance and origins.

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