

A Guide to Inclusive Language



Introduction



Here at Shakespeare's Globe we want everyone to **use inclusive language to create a welcoming and inclusive environment**. If inclusive language is not used, the audience may interpret the messaging in a way that is not how it was intended. The purpose of this guide is to offer guidance on how you can embed inclusive language into your verbal or written communications.

Some language in this guide may be triggering, such as when words are mentioned that you should not use, so **please read with caution**.

What is Inclusive Language?



Inclusive language reflects social and cultural diversity in a positive manner. To communicate using inclusive language means **avoiding words or terms that discriminate, exclude, or undermine** individuals or groups of people.

References to people's personal attributes, such as their race, gender, marital status, or religion, must be appropriate, relevant to the context, and used consistently.

Many **everyday terms and expressions can create and reinforce bias** whether they are used consciously or unconsciously. This can create a work environment that can be humiliating, offensive, and alienating. As the primary form of communication, **language plays a powerful role both in contributing to and eliminating discrimination.**

Inclusive Language

About Age



Language should be welcoming and sensitive to people of all ages. You should **avoid using terminology that assumes that people of certain age groups or generations are the same** or have similar skills, abilities, ambitions, and views.

References to differences among different age groups should only be used as relative terms with a clear and specific context, for example when analysing data. They should never be used to make generalisations about a group of people. Avoid these other generalisations as well:

- Older people are grumpy and bad with technology
- Women around the age of 50 are all menopausal
- Young people are lazy, arrogant and naive

In recruitment, don't use language to suggest the age of the job holder, for example, "you will join a young and energetic team", or "the job holder should have 15 years of experience". Think carefully before asking questions at interview that could be linked to age. Stick to competencies instead. For example, rather than asking, "how would you feel about managing an older team?" say "what skills do you have that will help you effectively manage a team?"

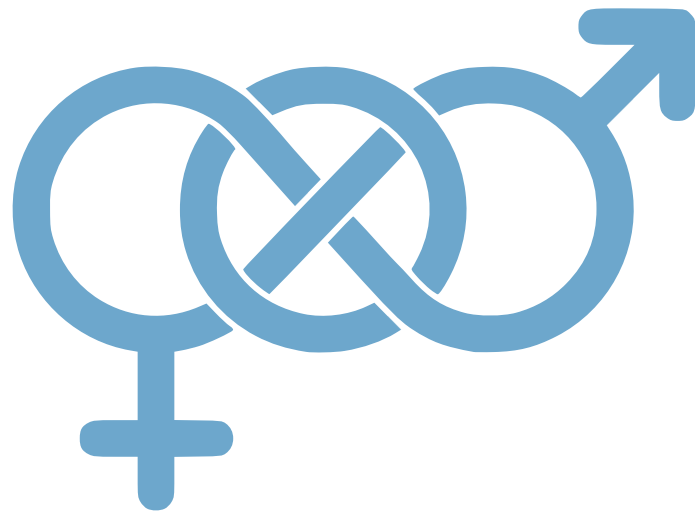
Say:

- "An older person", "an older adult", or "older people" instead of "the old" or "the elderly"
- "Younger person", "younger people", "young adults", or specify the age of the people you are referring to instead of "the young" or "kids" (unless you are talking about people under the age of 18)
- "Generation Z" or "younger generations" instead of "the woke generation"

Don't say:

- Geriatric or senile, as this suggests a link between older age and incompetence or inability
- Mature adult to describe an older person, as it suggests younger people are not mature
- Snowflakes to describe younger generations, as it suggests weakness

Inclusive Language About Gender & Gender Identity



Gender specific language can reinforce stereotypes with the effect of undermining certain people or groups.

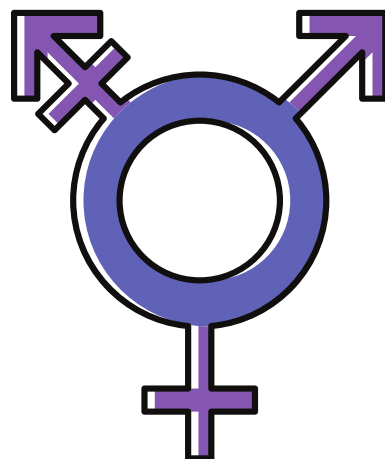
There is now recognition of a wider range of gender identities than just male and female, and **inclusive language that recognises and includes everyone regardless of their gender identity should be used.**

While the term gender is often used interchangeably with sex and gender identity, these are very different things.

Sex refers to the biological aspects of an individual as determined by anatomy and produced by chromosomes, hormones, and their interactions; sex is generally male or female or sometimes inter-sex and is something that is reported or assumed at birth.

Gender is a social construction relating to behaviours and attributes based on labels of masculinity (man) and femininity (woman).

Gender identity is a personal, internal perception and so the gender someone identifies with may not match the sex that was recorded at birth (as in the case of a person who is trans). An individual may see themselves as **a man, a woman, as having no gender, or as having a non-binary gender** - where people identify as somewhere on a spectrum between man and woman. People have the right to **self-identify**, and those who reject the binary tick boxes, may describe themselves as **non-binary** or **genderqueer**.



Gender identity is often grouped with sexual orientation in the acronym, **LGBTQ+** (**which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning** with the + recognising that people may identify in a wide range of ways and prefer to select their own terminology). However, **gender identity is very different from sexual orientation** and therefore has been separated within this guidance.

Consider following these principles:

- **Use gender neutral language**, including **pronouns** and examples where possible. This gender neutral approach avoids stereotyping people according to their gender and making offensive mistakes
- **Don't assume gender in written correspondence.** Write **Ms/Mr/Mx** on written correspondence when you do not know the gender of the recipient or if the full name is known, address to the name without a title
- In conversation, if you don't know a person's gender or how they identify, use gender neutral language until they indicate their gender or terms they would like you to use
- Only use the acronym **LGBTQ+** when the communication relates to both sexual orientation and gender identity

Inclusive Language About Race & Ethnicity



Ethnic and racial labels, names, and expressions can be created and used to portray certain groups as inferior or superior to others. Sometimes this usage is unintentional and stems from the continued dominance of white mainstream culture; other times, it is deliberately used to marginalise, demean, and discriminate.

Historically, the acronyms **BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic)** and **BME (Black Minority Ethnic)** have been used as an umbrella categorisation to describe people from ethnic minority groups - essentially people who were not white. In December 2021, the UK Government stopped using these terms and began referring to **ethnic minority groups** (or underrepresented ethnic groups) individually rather

than as a single group. **Avoid using the term BAME** as some people find this offensive.

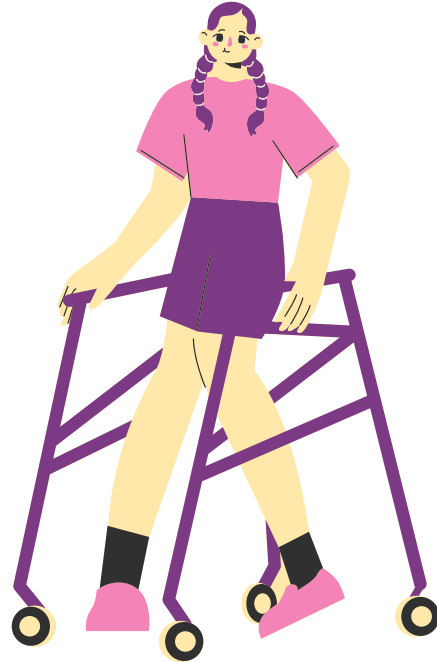
Think carefully before using the term person of colour or people of colour, as some people might find it offensive, even though it can also be seen as an empowering term. Try to **avoid umbrella descriptions** and instead use more specific language.

Say:

- “Minority ethnic group”, “people from ethnic minority groups” or “people from underrepresented ethnic groups” instead of “minority group” or “visible minority”
- “Person who is Asian” or “person of Asian heritage” instead of “Asians”
- “Mixed race” or “mixed heritage” instead of “half caste”
- “Someone from the traveller community” instead of “gypsy”



Inclusive Language About Disability



The linguistic portrayal of disabled people has traditionally emphasised the disability rather than the person. **People with a disability can be inappropriately seen as helpless**, to be pitied, and to be cared for rather than as equal and contributing members of society.

Consider these principles:

- **Focus on ability not disability.** Use positive language that empowers people and treats them with dignity and respect
- **Do not use language related to disability** (such as bipolar, PTSD, OCD, paranoid, or lame) **to describe everyday behaviours** in those without diagnosed conditions

Say:

- “Person with a disability, “people with disabilities”, or “people living with disabilities” instead of “the disabled”
- “Person without a disability” instead of “able bodied person”, “normal person”, or “healthy person”
- “People who are deaf” or “person who is hearing impaired” instead of “the deaf”
- “People who are blind” or “person who is visually impaired” instead of “the blind”
- “Person with dwarfism” instead of “midget” or “dwarf”
- A person is “living with a mental illness” or “has a diagnosis of mental illness” instead of saying someone is “mentally ill” or has a “mental disability”
- “Accessible toilet” or “accessible parking space” instead of “disabled toilet” or “disabled parking space”
- Someone’s “behaviour is unusual” or “erratic” instead of saying they are “crazy” or “psychotic”



Inclusive Language About Religion or Belief



As a traditionally Christian country, the UK has adopted some language that some people might not realise is linked to religion. Using this Christian centric language may exclude people who respect different religions and beliefs.

Say:

- “Religion or belief” instead of “faith”
- “Given name” instead of “Christian name”
- “People who recognise the Muslim religion” or “person from the Muslim community” instead of “Muslims”

Inclusive Language About Sexual Orientation



Sexual orientation is simply about who we are attracted to, or not attracted to, in the case of someone who is asexual. The enduring bias in society against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people makes many people feel invisible, marginalised, and inferior to heterosexual people.

Say:

- “Sexual orientation” instead of “sexual preference”
- “Gay”, “gay man”, “person who is gay” or “person who is bisexual” instead of “homosexuals” or “bisexuals”
- “Heterosexual” instead of “straight”
- “Partner” or “spouse” instead of “boyfriend”,

"girlfriend", "husband" or "wife" unless you know the individual involved and their preferred language

- "Parent" instead of "mother" or "father" unless you know the individual concerned and their preferred language

Don't say fag, bent, dyke, homo, or queen.

