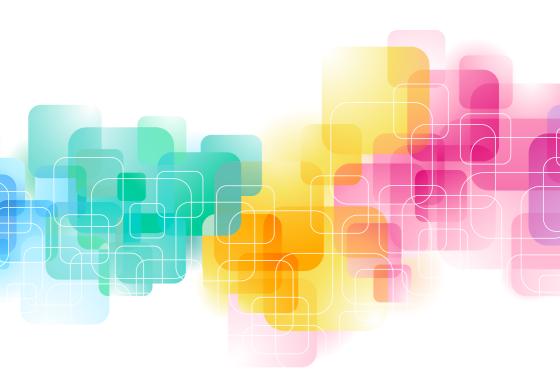
# WIPO Guidelines on Inclusive Language





## **Foreword**

Language is a reflection of the society in which we live and a vehicle for conveying its values. As those values evolve, so too does the language in which they are expressed. A vigorous debate continues to this day on how language can or should adapt to the changes that have taken place, and continue to take place, at many levels of society and to the growing awareness of the rights and needs of all its members.

On October 21, 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted resolution No. 70/1 on "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". That resolution was the basis of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that serve as way markers for development around the world until 2030. The word "inclusive" appears in the resolution 40 times. One of the many tools for achieving inclusive societies is language: just as important as the ideas behind development at all levels of societies is the way in which they are expressed and transmitted.

The rights of many different groups in society are enshrined in a series of United Nations human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990). They and many other such instruments have in common the desire to uphold the rights of all to equal and fair treatment, and thereby to make the world a better place.

A rights-based approach lies at the heart of the work of the United Nations system, of which the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is a specialized agency. WIPO has a particular interest in ensuring that all should enjoy the fruits of humanity's intellectual

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endeavors. That was underlined in 2013 with the adoption of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. Another practical way in which WIPO can contribute to that goal is by expressing itself, through its official documentation and publications, in an inclusive manner.

It is with that in mind that the following guidelines have been drawn up. They constitute a clear, concise and straightforward awareness-raising tool on how to approach the drafting of texts in a way that is consistent with WIPO's Medium Term Strategic Plan and which ensures that we "leave no one behind".

Daren Tang Director General

## Introduction

At the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), discrimination is defined as "any unfair or prejudicial treatment, or arbitrary distinction, based on a person's race, gender, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social origin or other status".

These guidelines contain strategies and tips to encourage the use of non-discriminatory language in WIPO documentation and publications, in line with the fundamental values of the United Nations regarding equality and diversity. The aim of employing inclusive language is to avoid the use of words, terms, expressions or grammatical structures that may, inadvertently or otherwise, be interpreted as in some way excluding individuals or groups of people.

WIPO recognizes that approaches to inclusive language vary across countries and cultures and that certain terms and expressions are not universally accepted. These guidelines are based on current broad practice in and beyond the United Nations system.

The guidelines consist of thematic modules and constitute a living document. It is anticipated that further modules will be added, and the current ones updated, in line with evolving practice.

What follows is a set of suggested and preferred approaches to certain linguistic situations. It is not prescriptive and common sense and clarity of text should always prevail. The conscious application of inclusive language does not need to be onerous. Often, relatively few and minor adjustments in the use of certain parts of speech and particular terms can make all the difference and require little effort. Non-exhaustive lists of terms are contained in annexes to each module.

<sup>1</sup> Office instruction No. 27/2021 on Workplace-related conflicts and grievances.

The guidelines are intended for use in the drafting, translation and revision of documents, publications and any other matter in print produced by WIPO. The aim is to harmonize practice across the Organization.

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## Guiding strategies

When writing inclusively from a gender equality perspective, it is important to take into account the communicative goal of the text and the type of text, its context and audience. That will determine which solutions best support its purpose and which strategy to use. These guidelines contain references to techniques to make language more inclusive. Combining them will help to produce readable, fluid and clear text.

Two strategies are generally used to make language gender-inclusive:

- Making gender invisible by using gender-neutral language. In most cases, gender is irrelevant to the communicative goal, and, in fact, distracts from the purpose of the text. Gender-neutral language makes no mention of gender, gender identity, sex or sexual orientation. In English, the use of gender-neutral language is the preferred strategy, because neutrality includes all human beings without making unnecessary distinctions.
- Making gender visible by using gendered language. This strategy can be useful in the context of promoting gender equality, which requires the use of language that represents men and women equally. The use of gendered language helps to re-establish a balance between an over-represented group (for instance, men) and one (or more) unrepresented groups (in this case, women). For example, in the case of a text discussing disparities, marginalization, inclusion or exclusion, specifying the gender is relevant as it highlights that different groups may be affected by or experience a situation differently.

In addition, gender-inclusive language avoids stereotypes and expressions that reinforce stereotypes. Language can perpetuate the stereotypical representation of one or more groups, associating it or them with specific traits, abilities, skills or behaviors.

## A. Gender-neutral language

In the majority of contexts, the gender aspect is irrelevant to the substance of what is being communicated. Where that is the case, the techniques listed below can be used.

The **generic masculine** (masculine as default) can be, and often is, perceived as biased language. The generic masculine consists in using masculine-specific nouns and pronouns when the noun or pronoun stands specifically either for a female person or for a person or group of indeterminate gender. The use of the generic masculine gives the impression that women are not represented in certain groups or do not possess certain skills. Representation is important for inclusive communication. In general, when sex or gender is not set, avoid defaulting to one sex with generic masculine nouns or pronouns.

#### Part I - Gender-neutral terms

1. Replace generic masculine nouns with gender-neutral nouns

Prefer	Avoid
This organization supports the rights of all humankind (humanity).	This organization supports the rights of all mankind.
The chairperson/chair gave the floor to the delegate.	The chairman gave the floor to the delegate.

See Annexes I and III for additional examples.

### 2. Replace generic masculine pronouns with gender-neutral nouns

### Prefer

Tell the student/writer/applicant to include a postal address.

### **Avoid**

Tell him to include a postal address.

### 3. Replace the third person with the second person

This can be useful when seeking to draw the reader into the text.

### Prefer

When sending your application, you should include a postal address.

### **Avoid**

When a student sends his application, he should include a postal address.

### Part II - Gender-neutral structures

### 1. Replace the generic masculine with plural forms

### Prefer

Students of the DL-101 course wishing/who wish to register for more advanced courses should send an email to the admissions office.

If students of the DL-101 course wish to register for more advanced courses, they should send an email to the admissions office.

Help your children to do it themselves.

Somebody forgot their phone in the conference hall.

### **Avoid**

If a student of the DL-101 course wishes to register for more advanced courses, he should send an email to the admissions office.

Help your child to do it himself.

Somebody forgot his phone in the conference hall.

The use of plural pronouns to refer to nouns in the singular (as in the last example), while strictly speaking grammatically incorrect, is gaining acceptance as a means of avoiding unnecessary reference to gender.

### 2. Use passive forms to replace the generic masculine

### **Prefer**

Students' applications should be accompanied by a postal address.

#### Avoid

When a student sends his application, he should include a postal address.

3. Replace the generic masculine or feminine pronoun with neutral expressions, or reformulate the sentence

### **Prefer**

Each assistant must learn to use the software when time permits.

Students should include a postal address when sending (their) applications.

Applications should include a postal address.

A rights holder who wishes to challenge a ruling may do so within three months.

A doctor in rural areas earns less than one in the capital.

### **Avoid**

Each assistant must learn to use the software when he can.

When a student sends her application, she should include a postal address.

If a rights holder wishes to challenge a ruling, he may do so within three months.

A doctor in rural areas earns less than she would in the capital.

## B. Gendered language

In some contexts, making gender visible is part of the communicative goal. This technique is effective when popular beliefs or preconceptions may obscure the presence or action of either gender. Representation helps redress imbalances so that groups that have enjoyed little or no visibility are included. This technique is important, especially when the communicative goal is to support gender equality and the reduction of disparities.

Although gender-neutral language is generally preferrable, in some instances, gendered language better serves the communicative purpose of the text. The efforts of WIPO to showcase women inventors or gender parity in management positions are examples of such cases.

Pairing is the main technique used. It involves juxtaposing two nouns or pronouns to represent more than one gender. When pairing nouns, alphabetical order ("female and male" or "men and women") is generally preferable.

### 1. Pairing

Replace generic masculine pronouns with paired pronouns

### **Prefer**

This job requires the recruitment of an IP expert. He or she must have a Master's degree in IP.

Two seats will be reserved for the Delegate and her or his assistant.

### Avoid

This job requires the recruitment of an IP expert. He must have a Master's degree in IP

Two seats will be reserved for the Delegate and his assistant.

Pairing can, however, hamper readability, especially if frequently repeated. It should therefore be used in conjunction with other solutions.

### 2. Forms of address

There should be consistency in the way women and men are referred to: "Mr." for men should be matched with "Ms." for women (rather than "Miss" or "Mrs.") since the marital status of a woman is irrelevant in most contexts. Moreover, if a person of one gender in a group is referred to by her or his name, last name, courtesy title or profession, the other one(s) should be as well.

When referring to or addressing specific individuals, forms of address and pronouns that are consistent with their gender identity should be used.

## C. Avoiding stereotypes

### Professions and skills

Professions and skills have no gender: men and women can exercise whichever profession, occupy any social role and possess any type of skill, as global data show. It is therefore important to use neutral terms so as not to stereotype professions or skills. For example, professions like nurse, doctor, Prime Minister and adviser are gender neutral in English.

On occasion, however, the goal of overcoming stereotypes may be better served by explicitly indicating that some professions can be exercised by an otherwise under-represented group or that certain skills or abilities are not necessarily the preserve of the groups traditionally associated with them. In such cases, pairing a neutral noun to a gendered adjective may in fact help to reverse traditional perceptions about which gender is "usually" associated with a given profession or activity. For instance:

Although the number of male nurses has increased in recent years, they still represent only 12 per cent of the nursing profession.

We are proud to lead the way in the recruitment of woman doctors in male-dominated specialties.

See Annex I for additional examples.

# Box: Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression

Heteronormativity is the belief that there are two genders, male and female, that the biological sex of one person coincides with their sexual orientation and that the default sexual orientation is heterosexuality. Such bias can result in the stigmatization and marginalization of the forms of sexual orientation and gender identity that are perceived to be outside the binary heteronormative options.

When dealing with sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, the same strategies ("make it visible" and "make it invisible") listed above should be used. When the sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression are not relevant to the communicative goal – which is generally the case – they should not be highlighted. When, on the other hand, the text aims to redress representation imbalances, fight stereotypes or promote inclusion, appropriate terms relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression should be used instead.

A glossary is available in Annex II.

When fighting discrimination and marginalization linked to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, the technique generally used is:

Replace heteronormative terms and expressions with gender-neutral words

### **Prefer**

Guests are cordially invited to attend with their partners.

### **Avoid**

Guests are cordially invited to attend with their wives.

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In addition, when personal data is collected – for example, in registration forms for events, etc. – three options (woman, man, other) should be provided as a minimum to users. A fourth option ("prefer not to say") can also be added depending on the content and purpose of the form. This solution contributes to inclusivity.

## Annex I

The following list of professions and roles is based in part on the guidance contained in *Gender-neutral language in the European Parliament*, issued by the European Parliament (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL\_Guidelines\_EN.pdf).

Use actor/actress if the person's gender is relevant  Use for women and men  Midwife may still be the preferable term, depending on the context
Midwife may still be the preferable term, depending on the context
Midwife may still be the preferable term, depending on the context
preferable term, depending on the context
preferable term, depending on the context
Not businessman; use businesswoman only if the person's gender is being stressed
Use cameraman/ camerawoman if the person's gender is relevant
Not chairman/chairwoman
Not cleaning lady
Not churchman

Craftsperson, artisan	Not craftsman
Delivery driver, delivery clerk, porter, courier, messenger	Not delivery man/delivery boy
Director	
Doctor, physician	
Drafter	Not draughtsman/ draughtswoman, draftsman/ draftswoman
Firefighter	Not fireman
Fisher(s)	Fisherman/men are still common usage and may be more appropriate, depending on context
Flight attendant/flight crew	Not air hostess(es) or stewardess(es)
Head of school/head teacher/ principal/director	Not headmaster or headmistress
Domestic worker/ household employee	Not housemaid
Intern	
Interpreter	
Journalist	
Judge	

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Lawyer	
Layperson (plural: laypeople)	Not layman/laymen
Lecturer	
Lumber cutter, tree cutter, wood chopper, logger	Not lumberman, lumberjack
Mail/postal carrier	Not mailman, postman
Manager	
Mayor	Not mayoress
Nurse	
Official	
Poet	Poetess or woman/female poet only when the gender is relevant
Police officer	Not policeman
Politician	
President	
Priest	Only use "woman priest" if gender is relevant; use "priestess" only in a historical context (e.g., Roman priestess of Vesta)
Prime Minister	
Professor	
	continued over

Not railway man
Not salesman
Not salesman/saleslady
Not spokesman/spokeswoman
Not sportsman/sportswoman
Avoid foreman where possible (may depend on context)
Not usherette
Not waiter/waitress
Not weatherman

## Annex II<sup>2</sup>

**Sexual orientation** A person's enduring capacity for profound romantic, emotional and/or physical feelings for, or attraction to, other people. Encompasses hetero-, homo-, bi-, pan- and asexuality, as well as a wide range of other expressions of sexual orientation. This term is preferred over the terms and phrases sexual preference, sexual behavior, lifestyle and way of life when describing an individual's attraction to other people.

**Gender identity** A person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth or the gender attributed to them by society. It includes the personal sense of the body, which may or may not involve a desire for modification of appearance or function of the body by medical, surgical or other means.

Gender expression Individuals use a range of cues, such as names, pronouns, behavior, clothing, voice, mannerisms and bodily characteristics, to interpret other individuals' genders. Gender expression is not necessarily an accurate reflection of gender identity. People with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics do not necessarily have a diverse gender expression. Likewise, people who do not have a diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics may have a diverse gender expression.

<sup>2</sup> Additional terms are available at IOM\_SOGIESC\_Full\_Glossary\_2020.pdf (squarespace.com)

## Annex III

The below list contains suggested alternatives to common gendered terms.

Use this	Instead of this
The human family, humanity, humankind	Brotherhood of man
Cave dweller, prehistoric people	Caveman/cavewoman
English person/national	Englishman
Founder of psychiatry	Father of psychiatry
Country of birth, homeland, native land	Fatherland/motherland
Feelings of kinship, solidarity, collegiality, unity, community	Feeling of brotherhood
Forebears	Forefathers
The founders, founding leaders	Founding fathers (except in historical contexts, such as with reference to the founding of the United States of America)
Person, individual, human, the human race	Man (unless talking about someone who is a man)
Humanity, humankind	Mankind
	continued ove

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Ordinary citizen, typical person, average person, layperson	Man in the street (although man and woman in the street may work as a form of gender pairing), layman
Farmer, rural worker, landowner	Man of the land
A faithful dog	Man's best friend
Adulthood, maturity	Manhood
Person-hours, work hours, staff hours	Man-hours
Hand-built, hand-made, synthetic, artificial, simulated, machine-made, human-caused (depending on context)	Man-made
Labor, workforce, employees, personnel, staff, human resources, labor force	Manpower
Fair, sporting	Sportsmanlike
Statecraft	Statesmanship
To operate, to staff etc.	To man (e.g., to man the phones, prefer: to answer the phones)
Service entrance, delivery entrance	Tradesman's entrance

## Sources and further information

### **General guides**

Inclusive Language Guide of the University of Calgary https://observatori382866246.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/inclusive-language-guide-june-13-2017.pdf

University of Victoria guidelines for inclusive language (covers gender and sex, Indigenous populations, disability, ethnicity and more) https://www.uvic.ca/brand/story/style/inclusivity/index. php#:~:text=Inclusive%20communication%20that%20respects%20 and,terms%20change%20as%20language%20evolves

### Gender-inclusive and gender-neutral language guides

American Psychological Association – article on Avoiding Heterosexual Bias in Language https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/language

Gender-neutral language in the European Parliament https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL\_Guidelines\_ EN.pdf

IOM/UNHCR Glossary of terms on gender and sexual identity https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5367af22e4b0915380a1eb0a/t/5a86fd718165f5f7f8fbe8ab/1518796147195/Annex+I+to+the+UN-GLOBE+Recommendations+-+IOM+UNHCR+glossary+of+terms.pdf

United Nations Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml

UN-Women Gender-inclusive language guidelines https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/gender-inclusive%20language/guidelines-on-gender-inclusive-language-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2633



## Module 2 Disability inclusive language

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## General guidance

The language for describing disability has evolved considerably over time. In writing about disability, the goal is to avoid words, terms or expressions that might be interpreted as conveying an impression of inferiority, implying exclusion or harking back to outdated concepts. The careful choice of inclusive language can therefore contribute to the goals enshrined in the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and efforts to address "ableism".

When referring to persons with disabilities, it is important to distinguish between the terms "impairment" and "disability".

- Impairment: Problems in body function or structure, such as a significant deviation or loss (Towards a Common Language for Functioning, Disability and Health, WHO, 2002, p. 10).
- Disability: Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

In other words, the term impairment refers to a person's physical, mental, intellectual or sensory condition(s), while disability results from the combination of such an impairment and barriers in the environment. A person can have more than one impairment. Impairments do not necessarily lead to disability. Impairments and disabilities are not always visible.

The use of terms like "bipolar OCD" (obsessive-compulsive disorder) and "ADD" (attention-deficit disorder) to describe the behavior of people without actual psychiatric disabilities should be avoided, as it trivializes the conditions to which such terms are properly applied.

## A. Person-first language

It is important to always refer to the person first, and the impairment or disability in a second instance. So for example, "persons who are blind or otherwise print disabled" and not "the blind" or "the print disabled".

Rather than defining people by the conditions they have or depersonalizing them by turning descriptors into nouns ("the disabled", "the blind", "a schizophrenic"), it is preferable to use person-first language, whereby the person is not defined by their impairment or disability.

In addition to the examples below, a further list is provided in the annex.

### 1. Use "with" phrases

Person with Down's syndrome, epilepsy, diabetes, autism etc.

### 2. Use "is" or "has" phrases

Person who is blind/deaf, person who is visually/hearing impaired.

Person who has Down's syndrome, epilepsy, diabetes, autism etc.

### 3. Avoid judgmental language

A person may have a condition but may not necessarily *suffer* from, be *afflicted* by or be a *victim* of it. In any event, the emphasis should be on a factual rather than value-laden description of the given situation. Wheelchair users, for instance, may well see their wheelchairs as a means of mobility and freedom rather than as a sign of their impairment.

"Wheelchair user" rather than "wheelchair-bound person".

"Person who has had a stroke" rather than "stroke victim".

## B. Omission

Mention of a person's impairment or disability should be avoided where irrelevant in a given context.

The student, who uses a wheelchair, described the accessibility of the campus. (Relevant)

The student, who uses a wheelchair, is a keen reader. (Irrelevant)

In addition to annex I of this module, further information on specific terms that may require additional clarification before being used is provided in annex II of the United Nations Office at Geneva Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines (available at https://www.ungeneva.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf).

## Annex

List of terms and phrases relating to disability, sourced from the United States Center for Disease Control, the Stanford Disability Initiative and other organizations.

Use this	Instead of this
Person with/who has a disability/an impairment, person with functional/ particular/individual needs or requirements	The disabled/handicapped, person with special needs
Person without a disability, non-disabled person	Normal/healthy/able- bodied person
Person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability; person with learning difficulties	Retarded/slow/feeble-minded/ simple/special/mentally handicapped person
Person with an emotional or behavioral disability, person with a mental health or a psychiatric/psychosocial disability	Insane, crazy, mad
Person with/who has depression	Depressive
Person with/who has schizophrenia	Schizophrenic
Person (living) with/who has HIV/AIDS	AIDS victim/patient
	continued over

## (HIV is the virus, AIDS is the syndrome)

Person who is hearing impaired/deaf (some people object to "hearing impaired" as it characterizes the condition in terms of a lack). The word "deaf" is best restricted to persons with a complete or nearly complete hearing loss. Other alternatives include: hard of hearing or person with limited hearing capacity

Person who is visually impaired/blind (some people object to "visually impaired" as it characterizes the condition in terms of a lack). The word "blind" is best restricted to persons with a complete or nearly complete loss of sight. Other alternatives include: person with/who has limited vision/low vision, person who has a print disability

Person with a speech impairment, who has a communication disorder, is unable to speak/uses a device to speak

### AIDS or HIV carrier

The deaf (avoid collective nouns to label persons with any given impairment)

The blind (avoid collective nouns to label persons with any given impairment). "Persons with a reading disability" should not be used to refer to people who cannot see printed text, but can read using other senses such as touch or if the text is adjusted (e.g. large print)

Mute, dumb (the latter in particular should be avoided, as it also implies limited intelligence)

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Person who uses a wheelchair, person with a mobility impairment/ reduced mobility	Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound
Person with/who has a physical disability	Crippled, lame, deformed, invalid, spastic
Person with/who has epilepsy	Epileptic
Person with/who has multiple sclerosis	Afflicted by MS
Person with/who has cerebral palsy	CP victim
Person with/who has diabetes	Diabetic
Accessible parking/bathroom	Handicapped parking/ bathroom
Person with/of short stature, little person/people	Midget. Note, although dwarfism is a legitimate medical term, some people prefer to avoid the terms "dwarf/dwarfism"
Person with/who has Down (or Down's) syndrome	Mongol or Mongoloid; s/he "is Downs"
Person with/who has a learning disability	Learning disabled person
Congenital disability	Birth defect
	continued over

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### Brain injury

He or she needs, uses... (e.g., narcotics), a person with alcoholism, with a drug addiction

### Brain damage

He or she has a problem with...(e.g., narcotics), addict, junkie

## Sources and further information

### **General guides**

Inclusive Language Guide of the University of Calgary https://observatori382866246.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/inclusive-language-guide-june-13-2017.pdf

University of Victoria guidelines for inclusive language (covers gender and sex, Indigenous populations, disability, ethnicity and more) https://www.uvic.ca/brand/story/style/inclusivity/index. php#:~:text=Inclusive%20communication%20that%20respects%20 and,terms%20change%20as%20language%20evolves

### Disability

Disability language guide – Stanford Disability Initiative https://disability.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj1401/f/disability-language-guide-stanford\_1.pdf

United Nations Office at Geneva Disability-inclusive Language Guidelines

https://www.ungeneva.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf

### Other references

Brain Injury Network www.braininjurynetwork.org/thesurvivorsviewpoint/politicallycorrect.html

Inclusive communication in the General Secretariat of the Council, Council of Europe

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35446/en\_brochure-inclusive-communication-in-the-gsc.pdf

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