



Inclusive Language Best Practices for ION

as of September 22, 2022

Introduction: In the spirit of inclusivity, ION has provided the following suggested best practices to ensure more mindful and thoughtful writing. Following inclusive writing practices is important to maintain leadership in the positioning, navigation, and timing community. This is the first version and will be updated periodically based on feedback from ION members, and evolving community norms. Please send suggestions and recommendations to: membership@ion.org

Unnecessary Personification and Metaphors

Don't use unnecessary personification or metaphor. Describe components and functionality in technical terms.

- Avoid socially-charged terms for technical concepts where possible. For example, avoid terms such as *blacklist*, *native feature*, even though these terms might still be widely used. Instead of using words like "*first-class*", consider other terms such as *core feature*, *built-in*, or *top-level*.
- Don't use *master/slave*, use *primary/secondary*, *primary/replica* or similar directly-descriptive and technical terms.

Abilities/Disabilities/Accessibility

When referring to, or writing with, accessibility and disability in mind, work to eliminate unintentional bias and harm. Take the time to educate yourself about the ways that the communities that you're writing about prefer to be identified and described before writing about them in your documentation. Some general guidelines include:

- Research the ways that the people in the communities that you're writing about prefer to be identified and use the terms that they prefer. In many cases, avoid terms that remove personhood or that define people by their disability. For example, avoid terms such as *the disabled* or *a quadriplegic*. Instead, use terms such as *people with disabilities* or *a quadriplegic person*.

However, many members of some communities prefer *identity-first language*—for example, that preference is common in Autistic, Blind, and Deaf communities. Note that capitalization of identities also can vary.

- When referring to people with disabilities, emphasize the person first and then the disability. For example, use *person with a disability*, not *disabled person* or *handicapped person*.
- Avoid words with negative connotations, or words that reflect or project feelings and judgements about a person's disability, such as *stricken* or *victim of*, or *suffering from*. The use of “*someone experiencing, uses or living with ___*” is generally accepted: “*someone living with depression*” or “*someone who has cerebral palsy.*”
- People with almost complete vision loss are considered blind or legally blind. Those who have partial sight may prefer the term *low vision*, *limited vision*, or *visually impaired*. If possible, ask for a person's preference.
- People who have total hearing loss are deaf. Those with partial hearing loss are *hard of hearing*. Again, ask for a person's preference. Some people with partial hearing loss who identify with the Deaf community prefer to be called *deaf/Deaf*, for example.
- Don't describe people without disabilities as *normal* or *healthy*. This contributes to othering and alienation of people with disabilities by implying that they are abnormal or sick. Instead, use terms such as person with *sight* and person with *hearing*.
- Use *accessible parking* rather than *handicapped parking*.
- Avoid euphemisms or patronizing terms such as *physically challenged*, *special*, *differently abled*, or *handi-capable*.

Ethnic/Racial Designations

Avoid referring to people in divisive ways. For example, instead of referring to people as *native speakers* or *non-native speakers* of English, consider whether your document needs to discuss this at all, and revise it so that it becomes relevant to anyone regardless of what languages they know. Some general guidelines and definitions include:

- Some races and ethnicities have multiple terms associated with them. When possible, ask for a person's preference (e.g., *Native American* vs. *American Indian*; *Asian* vs. *oriental*).
- *Native American*: A member of any of the first groups of people living in North America. (Other terms: *American Indian*, *First Nation* or *Indigenous person*)
- *Latino/a* or *LatinX*: Refers to someone of Latin American origin.
- *Hispanic*: Refers to someone of Spanish-speaking origin.
- *Spanish*: Refers to someone who is from Spain.
- *African American*: Refers to an American of African and especially of Black African descent. Some people who have generations of American ancestors prefer the term *black*.

- *Asian American*: Refers to an American of Asian descent. This is a diverse population with ancestral origins in South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia.
- When referring to race, lowercase black and white.
- Use *historically underrepresented groups* or people of color instead of *minorities*. People of color are actually the majority in many large U.S. cities.
- Do not use a hyphen in ethnic classifications such as *African American* or *Italian American*.

Gender and Sexual Orientation

Make content gender neutral wherever possible. If you're writing about a hypothetical person or if you're unsure of the person's pronouns, use they or them instead of he/she. Avoid words and phrases that indicate gender bias, such as irrelevant descriptions of appearance. Use descriptors of gender identity or sexual orientation as modifiers, not as nouns (for example, *transgender person*, *cisgender person*, or *lesbian woman*). Avoid guessing sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. When in doubt, either reconsider the need to include this information or ask the person you're referring to how they identify and what terms they prefer:

- Avoid *guys* as a way to refer to mixed-gender groups.
- Don't make assumptions about marital or family relationships (for example, use *spouse* or *partner* instead of *husband* and *wife*; use *parent* instead of *mother* and *father*).

Nationality

Avoid using *citizen* as a generic term for people who live in the United States. Many government programs serve non-citizens and individuals with a wide range of immigration and visa statuses.

- How you refer to the public is largely dependent on context. Feel free to choose from any of these words: *people*, *the public*, *users*, or *folks*.
- Be as specific as possible. Depending on the situation, you may want to say something like *people who need navigation services*.
- Use *citizens* as it specifically refers to citizenship in a defined nation for a defined purpose only. For example: don't say '*citizens*' to mean citizens of the USA; every country has citizens. If you mean '*citizens of the USA*' then say so.