

# Inclusive Language Guide

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## Sport Wales guide to using inclusive language

At Sport Wales, we acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of the communities we serve, which encompass a range of differences including age, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, gender identity, and many other characteristics. It is our sincere commitment to continuously improve our language to ensure that everyone feels included and valued, regardless of whether they were born in Wales or have chosen it as their home. We recognize that language is a dynamic and evolving tool that shapes our communication and connections, and we strive to keep pace with these changes.

As we continuously broaden our understanding of one another, our comprehension of language grows, leading to some words becoming outdated. Language holds immense power, and can be a catalyst in altering attitudes and behaviours. This guide serves as a reflection of this idea, offering suggestions on language usage and examples of what to avoid. However, the most important aspect is consistently applying inclusive language principles and maintaining openness to learning and unlearning. We welcome any and all suggestions and modifications, as this guide is a living entity, reflective of our vibrant community.

## What if I get it wrong?

As we embark on a journey towards respectful language and inclusiveness, it is imperative to acknowledge that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. When we set out to expand our knowledge, it is only human to sometimes make mistakes. However, it is essential to acknowledge these missteps, offer an apology, and embrace the opportunity to learn and grow. Let us not allow ourselves to be defensive, but instead approach these challenges with resilience, determined to do better the next time.

It is equally important to recognise that repeated mistakes can be interpreted as a lack of respect and can cause distress to those around us. Let us strive to be conscious of the impact of our language and make a concerted effort to be mindful of its usage at all times.

Let's strive to be mindful and considerate of our language, especially when it comes to individuals and communities with diverse abilities or backgrounds. We understand that using the right terminology can be uncomfortable at times.

However, it's important to remember that everyone has their own preferred way of referring to themselves, so don't be afraid to ask directly. Your openness and willingness to seek clarification demonstrate your respect for their autonomy and your commitment to fostering an inclusive atmosphere.

## Example

**Rather than;**

**How about?**

**“assume/project your biases”**

**“I would like to be respectful of your preferred terms, how you would like me to refer to you?”**

Our Inclusive Language Guide is not exhaustive and will evolve over time along with changes in language. We welcome any recommendations or new examples that you may have, and encourage you to share them with us at [inclusivelanguage@sport.wales](mailto:inclusivelanguage@sport.wales). We update the guide bi-monthly and will communicate updates through Keeping Connected.

# Age

At Sport Wales, we have a diverse age range of staff, whilst we recognise we are underrepresented within certain age ranges, we strive to create an environment where everyone feels that they belong.

For further guidance take a look here:

[https://olderpeople.wales/library/How\\_to\\_avoid\\_ageism\\_in\\_communications\\_-\\_Practical\\_tips\\_for\\_professionals.pdf](https://olderpeople.wales/library/How_to_avoid_ageism_in_communications_-_Practical_tips_for_professionals.pdf)

## Tips when considering inclusive language

- Avoid using the terms "girls" or "boys" when referring to co-workers or staff, as these terms are associated with children.
- Refrain from using language that perpetuates age-based stereotypes such as ‘...you can’t teach an old dog new tricks...’
- Steer clear of ageist terminology such as "elderly," "OAPs," "pensioners," or "youngsters."

## Examples

**Rather than;**

**How about?**

**“the boys/girls in the office”**

**“our colleagues in the office”**

**Rather than;**

**How about?**

**“a young and vibrant team/a mature workforce”**

**“an experienced team”**

# Disability

Sport Wales is a Disability Confident Employer. Under the provisions of the Equality Act (2010), the term “disability” covers a wide scope including individuals with learning differences, mental health conditions, physical conditions, long-term medical conditions, hearing impairments, auditory impairments, and neurodivergence, eg ADHD and Autism Spectrum Conditions. Under the Equality Act (2010), a disability is a condition that lasts (or is expected to last) for 12 months or longer with a substantial impact on day-to-day life.

For further guidance take a look here: <https://www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb>

## Tips when considering inclusive language

- Refrain from using generalizing language, opt for more specific terms or names.
- Avoid terms that assume a lack of disability as normal or healthy.
- Use inclusive language, avoiding binaries or descriptors that imply a standard.
- Do not use language that exaggerates the impact of a disability.
- Avoid outdated and derogatory terms in any context.
- Avoid terms that equate the person with the ability or disability.
- Avoid the use of euphemisms.
- Avoid excessive praise for the daily accomplishments of individuals with disabilities.

## Examples

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“the disabled, the handicapped”**  
**“person with a disability/people with disabilities”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“normal, healthy, able-bodied person”**  
**“people without a disability”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“disabled toilets/lifts”**  
**“accessible toilets/lifts”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“wheelchair-bound, confined to a chair”**  
**“wheelchair users”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“cancer or dementia sufferers”**  
**“people living with cancer or dementia”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“challenged, special”**  
**“person with learning difference”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“courageous, inspiring, heroic”**  
**“\_\_\_\_\_”**

# Neurodiversity

For further guidance take a look here: <https://www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb>

## Tips when considering inclusive language

- Use person-first language (e.g., "person with autism").
- Respect preferred terminology chosen by individuals.
- Avoid pathologizing language or negative connotations.
- Emphasize strengths and diverse abilities.
- Be open to learning and adapting language use.

## Examples

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“Normal/Abnormal”**  
**“Neurotypical/Neurodivergent”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“Disorder”**  
**“Neurodivergent trait”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“High-functioning/low-functioning”**  
**“High support needs/low support needs”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“Suffering from autism/ADHD”**  
**“Person living with autism/ADHD”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“crazy, psycho, mad, mental”**  
**“\_\_\_\_\_”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“a dyslexic”**  
**“person with dyslexia”**

# Sex, gender, and gender identity

In our pursuit of deliberate and inclusive language usage, it's crucial to steer clear of making references to an individual's gender or sexual orientation unless it's relevant to the topic at hand. This typically entails striving for gender neutrality when utilising language, terminology, and pronouns.

## Tips when considering inclusive language

- Use gender-neutral terms like "they/them" instead of gendered ones (he/him, she/her).
- Avoid language that assumes a gender binary.
- Use person-centred language that focuses on the individual rather than gender.
- Validate and respect transgender experiences by using preferred pronouns and avoiding insensitive language.
- Introduce yourself and your pronouns to encourage others to do the same – use gender-neutral pronouns unless you know a person's preferred pronoun(s).
- Respect people's pronoun preferences, including those who want to be referred to by gender-neutral pronouns.
- Use inclusive terms for relationships.
- Avoid job titles that suggest a specific gender.
- Be mindful of in-group vs out-group terminology (e.g. don't use slang that only those in a specific community would use)
- Avoid describing someone's gender unless it's relevant.
- Recognise and respect the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity.

## Examples

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“welcome ladies and gentlemen”**  
**“welcome everyone”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“a transgender”**  
**“trans(gender) people/person”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“born female or male”**  
**“assigned male/female at birth”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“assuming she, her, hers and he, him, his”**  
**“They, them, theirs”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“boyfriend, wife, husband”**  
**“partner, spouse”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“cleaning ladies/fireman”**  
**“cleaners/firefighter”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“queer”**  
**“LGBTQIA+ community”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“a female scientist/a male nurse”**  
**“a scientist/a nurse ”**

**Rather than;**

**“using LGBTQIA+ if you are only talking about gender or gender identity / using straight as the opposite of LGBTQIA+ (transgender people can be any sexual orientation, including straight)”**

**How about?**

**“using LGBTQIA+ only when referring to both sexual orientation and gender identity-based communities”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“Girls are born like that…”**  
**“STOP! And think about the social construct of gender”**



# Sexual orientation

For further support: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtqia-mental-health/useful-contacts/>

## Tips when considering inclusive language

- Avoid terms that imply a person had control over their identity or circumstances (e.g. "lifestyle choice")
- Use person-centred language that focuses on the individual rather than labels or categories
- Acknowledge and respect diverse family structures and relationships
- Differentiate between sexual orientation and gender identity, and respect both
- Avoid using outdated or offensive terminology

## Examples

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“sexual preference”**  
**“sexual orientation”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“lesbians, gays, bisexuals”**  
**“lesbian, gay, bisexual people”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“mother and father”**  
**“parents/caregivers”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“homosexuals/tranny/sex change”**  
**“gay/transgender/gender-affirming surgery”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“what does your boyfriend do?”**  
**“What does your partner do?”**

# Race, ethnicity, and nationality

At Sport Wales, we do not view our commitment to the race equity agenda as a fleeting seasonal concern. The pursuit of racial and social justice is central to our mission.

## Tips when considering inclusive language

- Use descriptive adjectives to refer to someone's race or ethnicity, rather than labelling them as a whole.
- Avoid irrelevant mentions of race or ethnicity that don't add context or information to the conversation.
- Avoid terms that generalize or simplify the experiences of marginalised groups.
- Avoid grouping people based on arbitrary or unimportant differences; instead, focus on individual experiences and perspectives.
- Avoid language that reinforces harmful stereotypes or perpetuates a "deficit model" where marginalized groups are seen as inherently lacking or in need of fixing.
- Avoid using outdated, racist, or otherwise offensive language.
- Avoid language that dehumanises or objectifies people based on their race, ethnicity, or other identity markers.
- Yes, you can be from Global Majority Communities and be Welsh.
- Using terms like "Nitty Gritty", this phrase referred to the debris found at the bottom of a slave ship once its human cargo had been unloaded.

## Examples

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**"Asians"**  
**"Asian people"**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**"the Asian doctor"**  
**"the doctor"**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**"Where are you from? No Really where are you from?"**  
**"\_\_\_\_\_"**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**"BAME / BME"**  
**"Ethnic Minority People"**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“other”**  
**“using a defined and reported category from this group, especially when reporting on racial and ethnic categories.”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“illegal immigrant”**  
**“undocumented”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“lived experience”**  
**“experts by lived experience”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“Do you play (insert prejudice sport here based on appearance)?”**  
**“Do you enjoy participating in sports? If so what sport do you enjoy?”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“Nitty gritty...”**  
**“The detail... ”**

# Religion or belief

At Sport Wales stand in strong opposition to both antisemitism and Islamophobia. Our unwavering commitment to creating an all-inclusive and inviting atmosphere for all individuals is rooted in prioritizing the eradication of racial and religious bias.

## Tips when considering inclusive language

- Refrain from using Christian-centric terms for the sake of respect and to avoid confusion.
- Instead of using "last name," consider using "family name" to accommodate different cultural norms.
- When referring to religious or belief-based groups, refer to them as people.

## Examples

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“Christian name/surname”**  
**“first name, given name/family name”**

**Rather than;**  
**How about?**

**“Muslims /Jews”**  
**“Muslim People/Jewish People”**