Inclusive Naming Initiative

Tier 1: Replace Immediately

Tier 1 terms should be replaced whenever encountered. Terms included in this list have one or all of the following:

- Strong social consensus within the software development community on replacements
- Are identified by the Inclusive Naming Initiative as high-severity terms in need of immediate replacement
- Terms where the impact of change or removal is low: for example, there is little entanglement in low-level systems or standardized language set by standards bodies
- Have passed through all the review stages in Tiers 2 and 3

Terms

Terms

Word List: Tier 1

Term: abort

Definition

None

Related Terms

- abortion

Usage Context

Recommendation

Replace when possible.

Recommended Replacements

- User-Initiated Termination
- Force quit
- Cancel
- System-Initiated Termination
- Fail
- Close (app, program, connection)
- End
- Halt
- Hard stop
- Stop (something you triggered)

Unsuitable Replacements

- Kill (as in Linux systems)

Rationale

The term "abort" frequently appeared in Inclusive Language Initiative surveys and standards reviews. Multiple organizations felt that usage of the word posed an issue worth addressing in their individual companies and projects. Given this widespread interest, the INI has decided to offer its own guidance.

INI recommends replacing "abort" wherever possible. In accordance with the INI's language framework, the term does not necessarily constitute a first-order concern. However, because it is such a charged term outside of computing, "abort" fails to provide a clear description of the action being taken, and serves primarily to distract. There are numerous other words in the English language that can serve the same purpose in computing without invoking the emotionally charged cultural context of "abort."

Although the INI debated whether the word "abort" itself or the procedure commonly associated with it ("abortion") caused the aforementioned distractions, the etymology of the word has a direct and unambiguous link to the termination of a pregnancy. Alternative uses of the word "abort" are in use today, such as in rocketry. However, the INI concluded that the term itself was insufficiently distanced from its original meaning for those alternative definitions to be its primary association.

All this being said, the INI does not advocate for a blanket replacement of the term. "Abort" appears in many standards organization documents, and is deeply embedded in some operating systems. As such, the INI acknowledges that the term may need to be retained in certain contexts to remain in compliance with those standards, or to preserve accurate documentation for bedrock functions and processes that are too fundamental to be changed.

Some organizations have noted that using "abort" in contexts other than the medical or political serves to de-stigmatize the term, thereby promoting repro-

ductive rights and bodily autonomy. Conversely, discouraging the term could be interpreted as accepting a framing that denies a pregnant person's right to control their body. The judgment of the INI is that the term causes discomfort or offense without providing a necessary degree of technical clarity, and therefore it should be avoided. At some future point, because language changes over time, "abort" may become a less contentious term; at that juncture, the appropriateness of the term may be revisited.

Term Status

Version: 0.1

Created: August 2021

Review status:

- Reviewed by Inclusive Naming Initiative
- Approved by Inclusive Naming Initiative Language Workstream
- Reviewed by URM organizations and working groups
- Reviewed by professional diversity consultants

Supporting Content

None

Word List: Tier 1

Term: blackhat-whitehat

Definition

N/A

Related Terms

- None

Usage Context

Recommendation

Replace immediately.

Recommended Replacements

- ethical hacker
- unethical hacker, attacker

Unsuitable Replacements

- None

Rationale

The terms *white hat* and *black hat* promote racial bias because black is used to indicate malevolence while white indicates ethical, positive behavior.

Term Status

N/A

Supporting Content

Adapted from a recommendation originally published by the IBM Inclusive IT Language Initiative Words Matter working group.

Word List: Tier 1

Term: cripple

Definition

N/A

Related Terms

- crippled
- crippleware

Usage Context

Recommendation

Adopt immediately.

Recommended Replacements

- Impacted
- Degraded
- Restricted
- Immobilized

Unsuitable Replacements

- None

Rationale

The terms cripple, crippled, and crippleware are sometimes used in writing about software or computer systems. These terms are rarely, if ever, used in software itself. These terms are used to indicate the following:

- To limit functionality in software or to degrade performance of a system
- An organization that is impacted, such as by a security breach'

The term is ableist, that is, a pejorative term for people with physical disabilities.

Example usage of recommended replacements:

- Crippled performance speed
    - Impacted
    - Degraded
- Crippled functionality
    - Restricted
- Security issues cripple an organization
    - Impacted
    - Immobilized
- Crippleware
    - Software with restricted functionality

Term Status

N/A

Supporting Content

N/A

Word List: Tier 1

Term: master

Definition

In computing, A "master" often refers to the original or main version of an entity.

Related Terms

- N/A

Usage Context

Recommendation

Adopt immediately.

Recommended Replacements

- main
- original
- source
- control plane

Unsuitable Replacements

- N/A

Rationale

While master in and of itself is potentially neutral, the propensity in which it is associated with the term slave in computing makes master on its own guilty by association. Though it is used as a standalone, it's impossible to remove the association with command and control entirely, and thus we recommend moving away from even singular use.

Term Status

Nill

Supporting Content

- github/renaming

Word List: Tier 1

Term: master-slave

Definition

The "master/slave" metaphor in computing refers to a system with a single store of record and a set of replicas which maintain copies of the original data.

Related Terms

- N/A

Usage Context

Recommendation

Adopt immediately

Recommended Replacements

- Control plane/control plane node
- Controller/doer
- Primary/replica
- Primary/secondary
- Leader/follower
- Parent/child

Unsuitable Replacements

- N/A

Rationale

As the IETF puts it, "Master-slave is an oppressive metaphor that will and should never become fully detached from history." The word's origins and historicial use reveal use that is at best chauvinistic and racist, and in almost all cases connotative of ownership. While there is some small ambiguity about the term master, the term slave is unambiguously about the ownership and subjugation of another person, and has been since its inception.

The terms master/slave are harmful to Black and people of color contributors and employees. Slavery is a tradition barely 3 generations abolished – there are grandparents alive today who were actual, non-metaphorical slaves. Segregation and Apartheid are even more recent. In accordance with most open source codes of conduct and company handbooks, the mandate of all people in a project is to create a welcoming space, regardless of the level of experience, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, personal appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, age, religion, or nationality. Master/slave are not welcoming words.

Term Status

Nill

Supporting Content

- Broken Metaphor: The Master-Slave Analogy in Technical Literature
- IETF Network Working Group: Terminology, Power and Oppressive Language
- django/django PR #2692
- Python issue #34605
- Drupal issue
- COUCHDB-2248

Word List: Tier 1

Term: whitelist

Definition

Lists which permit or deny a set of nouns, or select enabled features.

Related Terms

- blacklist

Usage Context

Recommendation

Adopt immediately

Recommended Replacements

- allowedNouns/deniedNouns (or other verbs)
- allowlist/denylist

Unsuitable Replacements

- N/A

Rationale

The underlying assumption of the whitelist/blacklist metaphor is that white = good and black = bad. Because colors in and of themselves have no predetermined meaning, any meaning we assign to them is cultural: for example, the color red in many Southeast Asian countries is lucky, and is often associated with events like marriages, whereas the color white carries the same connotations in many European countries.

From a technical communication perspective, using whitelist/blacklist as a naming convention applies metaphor (and, in turn, unintended meaning) when it isn't needed. A suitable verb or adjective enhances understanding by replacing the metaphor with a direct description.

In English, "whitelist" and "blacklist" can be used as either verbs or nouns. As a verb, commonly used words such as "allow" or "deny" can be used directly. Depending on the context, other verbs such as "skip", "ignore", "block", "waive", "disable" can be used instead. As a noun, words such as "allowlist" and "denylist" are in use and are more descriptive than whitelist/blacklist, but they may be difficult to translate to other human languages. Consider prefixed forms instead, such as "allowedRecipients" as a replacement for "recipientWhitelist"; in descriptive text (as opposed to code) you may want to prepend "list of", as in "list of allowed recipients".

Term Status

N/A

Supporting Content

(1) "Blacklists" and "whitelists": a salutary warning concerning the prevalence of racist language in discussions of predatory publishing (2) IETF Network Working Group: Terminology, Power and Oppressive Language (3) Android PR (4) cURL PR