![ACS Chemistry for Life®]

ACS Inclusivity Style Guide

TIP SHEET General guidelines

For more context, review the "General guidelines" section of the Inclusivity Style Guide.

Language evolves

Visit the full guide periodically to ensure your language stays up to date. Periodic reviews for outdated language are especially important for those maintaining web pages.

Involve a diverse group of people

Be as inclusive and collaborative as you can while creating content, particularly when writing for a broad audience. Do not rely on the same person every time a topic relating to a group they belong to arises.

Respect self-descriptions

Ask people how they want to be described, and respect that language. This includes the use of pronouns, the mention of racial or ethnic background, the use of honorifics or titles, and even the career role and spelling of someone's name.

Be appropriately specific

Avoid relying on a label for a large group of people when discussing only a subset of that group.

Example

✅ **Use:** Black, Hispanic, and Asian students reacted positively.
❌ **Avoid:** Students of color reacted positively.

Mention personal information thoughtfully

Mentioning a characteristic such as race for some people and not others can introduce bias. Mention personal information only when it is immediately relevant to the topic.

Avoid labels

Avoid labeling people by a characteristic, and recognize that a particular characteristic does not define or describe a person as a whole.

Example

✅ **Use:** older people
❌ **Avoid:** the elderly

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Age

For more context, review the "Age" section of the Inclusivity Style Guide. Use this tip sheet in combination with the "General guidelines" tip sheet.

Avoid stigmatizing terms

Generally use "older people" or "older adults" instead of "senior citizens" or "the elderly."

Avoid framing aging as negative

Avoid implying that being young is better than being old.

Example

✅ **Use:** 70 years old

❌ **Avoid:** 70 years young

Recognize diversity within generations

Avoid generational terms, which imply that people of a certain generation are homogeneous.

Example

✅ **Use:** people born between 1946 and 1964

❌ **Avoid:** baby boomers

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TIP SHEET Body size

For more context, review the "Body size" section of the Inclusivity Style Guide. Use this tip sheet in combination with the "General guidelines" tip sheet.

Avoid stigmatizing terms

Use comparative terms such as "higher weight" rather than the medical terms "obese" and "overweight."

Example

✅ **Use:** larger-bodied people
❌ **Avoid:** people with obesity

Don't conflate weight and health, but also avoid healthism

Don't assume that higher weight causes poor health. Also recognize that higher-weight people deserve equitable treatment regardless of what their health is.

Provide context

When making statements about weight, ensure they are backed by strong science. Provide context about the limitations of studies, the harms of intentional weight loss, the myriad factors that contribute to links between weight and health outcomes, and researchers' conflicts of interest.

Example

✅ **Use:** Participants were drawn from [criteria for participating in the study]. [Number of participants] lost on average [overall number and percentage of starting weight] after [amount of time]. This change remained after controlling for [factors controlled for]. [Number of people] dropped out of the study because of [reasons].
❌ **Avoid:** The drug successfully led to long-term weight loss in a large sample.

Avoid problematic frames

Avoid framing higher-weight people as an epidemic, a source of blame, or a burden. Avoid describing weight loss, thinness, or dieting as universally good goals that are easy to attain.

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TIP SHEET Disabilities, disorders, and other health conditions

For more context, review the "Disabilities, disorders, and other health conditions" section of the Inclusivity Style Guide. Use this tip sheet in combination with the "General guidelines" tip sheet.

Be mindful of people-first and identity-first language

People-first language (e.g., "person with autism") and identity-first language (e.g., "autistic person") are two ways of considering a condition. Use whichever the person or group prefers.

Example

✅ **Use:** people with disabilities, the disability community
❌ **Avoid:** the disabled

Use neutral language

When describing a health condition, use neutral terms like "with" or "has" rather than terms that connote pity or imply a person has a reduced quality of life.

Example

✅ **Use:** She has cancer.
❌ **Avoid:** She suffers from cancer.

Avoid stigmatizing language

Words such as "abuse" have connotations of crime and violence. Instead of "drug abuse," use the term "misuse" or an adjective in combination with the word "use."

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For more context, review the "Socioeconomic status" section of the Inclusivity Style Guide. Use this tip sheet in combination with the "General guidelines" tip sheet.

Avoid deficit-based language

Avoid dehumanizing language that leads with deficits. Use language that looks at root causes and describes the barriers that impede those seeking opportunity.

Example

✅ **Use:** Consider donating to help students from lower socioeconomic groups participate in science research.

❌ **Avoid:** Consider donating to ensure these impoverished students receive the help they desperately need.

Show variety within socioeconomic status groups

Avoid language that treats socioeconomic status groups as homogeneous or that treats higher socioeconomic status groups as the norm.

Example

✅ **Use:** Buying a car is a privilege enjoyed by some teens in the US.

❌ **Avoid:** Buying a car is an important coming-of-age ritual for every teen.

How to refer to occupation

Avoid representing some types of employment as being inherently better than others, and avoid describing jobs or workers as "unskilled" or "low skill." Use specific descriptions instead of "blue collar" and "white collar."

Avoid outdated and generalizing terms for countries

Avoid using broad, vague terms that signal entire parts of the globe as "other," such as "developed" and "developing" nations and "first world" and "third world" countries. When discussing groups of countries, identify them by name or specific geographic regions.

Example

✅ **Use:** low-income countries in East Asia

❌ **Avoid:** the Global South

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Images

For more context, review the "Inclusive images" section of the Inclusivity Style Guide. Use this tip sheet in combination with the "General guidelines" tip sheet.

Use images that reflect diversity

Aim to use images that show the diversity of our world. Consider skin tone, gender expression, age, disability status, body size and shape, and hair texture. At the same time, ensure the images are authentic and don't just take a "one of each" approach.

Don't perpetuate stereotypes

Ensure depictions of people, including their positions in the image, roles, facial expressions, clothing, and props, do not reinforce stereotypes.

Be accurate

Ensure images accurately depict cultures, and avoid editing photos to artificially show more diversity.

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TIP SHEET   Data visualization

For more context, review the "Data visualization" section of the Inclusivity Style Guide. Use this tip sheet in combination with the "General guidelines" tip sheet.

Identify biased data

Examine data for biases or gaps. Consider the data's context and the potential harm or erasure that may result from how they are presented. Use caution with topics such as crime and public safety.

Design with empathy

Consider whether certain chart types or whether focusing on a smaller range of data might help people connect with the human element of the data.

Disaggregate when possible

Disaggregate data when groups experience dissimilar effects, there isn't a shared history, or members of the community say analyzing these populations together is unreasonable (Urban Institute, 2022). If you lack data on specific subgroups, acknowledge that limitation. Also avoid using an "Other" category.

Handling small data samples

If the sample size for a particular group is very small, avoid omitting the data entirely or noting "not statistically significant" without additional context.

Example

✅ **Use:** The C&EN article "What US Chemists Made in 2022" shows data for all identity groups surveyed, even those with low numbers. To ensure readers could make informed choices about how to interpret the data, the article includes the number of respondents for each group and the note "ACS considers data calculated from fewer than 50 responses unreliable. C&EN included small groups to help make all members visible."

Choosing color in data visualizations

Avoid choosing colors at random without considering their meaning or cultural associations. Recognize when certain colors may perpetuate stereotypes, and prevent introducing distortions in the data.

Ordering groups in data visualizations

Carefully think about the order in which groups are presented and how it might imply a hierarchy. Consider starting with the particular group the study is focused on or sorting the groups alphabetically.

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TIP SHEET   Accessibility

For more context, review the "Accessibility" section of the Inclusivity Style Guide. Use this tip sheet in combination with the "General guidelines" tip sheet.

Don't forget alt text

Alt text provides people who use screen readers a description of any nontext element, so it is essential for helping those with low or no vision understand a web page. Provide clear, concise alt text for all images. When a longer description is needed, options include providing a text summary beneath the graphic or in a linked document.

Avoid images of text

Using an image of text instead of actual text means that people using screen readers will not be able to access the information. Choose text, an HTML data table, or other languages supported by the platform to share text, formulas, equations, or diagrams.

Make transcripts and captions available

Transcripts make videos and podcasts accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. They are also useful to anyone that benefits from reading information. Captions are also a necessary accessibility feature for videos.

Choose colors carefully

Adjacent colors should generally follow minimum contrast requirements set by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Also, use a combination of colors and symbols or text rather than color alone to communicate information.

Resources

- TPGi's Colour Contrast Analyser: https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/
- WebAIM's Contrast Checker: https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/

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