

The Sensitive Content Review & Diversity Style Guide

2023-24 academic year

The Daily Pennsylvanian, Inc.

For reporters and copy editors' use. May be utilized by other staffers responsible for sensitive content reporting and review. For additional questions, reach out to

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Introduction.

The Sensitive Content Review and Diversity Style Guide is a collection of resources and guidelines for sensitive content reporting at the Daily Pennsylvanian.

The purpose of the Diversity Style Guide:

- Provide guidance for the writers in addressing sensitive topics.
- Raise consciousness & cultural competence of journalists.
- Promote standards for inclusive, fair, timely coverage.
- Encourage accurate and bias-free journalistic reporting among staffers.

Areas of focus:

- Race, ethnicity, cultural identity
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Mental health and disability
- Other topics in media coverage

Message to the users of the guide:

If you have any specific questions or concerns, let the editors/DIS director know. Likewise, for questions, suggestions, and other comments about the content and the format of the guide, contact the project lead for the current year: Dalila Gafar (disdirector@thedp.com)

General Notes on DEI & Common Corrections

1. **Active voice/passive voice:** subject performs the action vs. an action is performed on the subject. Depends on the context, e.g., for inducing accountability, use active voice.
2. **Person first /identity first language:** Ask the person which one they prefer using, since it is a gray area for many people. (i.e., noun-adj OR adj-noun). When preference cannot be determined, AP Style suggests using person-first language.
3. **Iterations of the word, grammar rules** (e.g., hyphenation, capitalization etc.); vary depending on the word, see more in the document below.
4. **Self-identification & quotation rules:** when in doubt, always reach out to clarify how a person wants to be referred to, when it comes to a part of their identity mentioned in any content produced by the reporter. If there are any quotes used, do not change the language within those quotes, but feel free to add corrections in brackets when necessary, and clarify that this is the author's/publication's correction.

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Common Topics in Media Coverage

Race/Ethnicity/Cultural identity

- Be as specific as possible, if information on the origin/background is known. Ask people how they would like to identify. e.g.,: Mexican American over Latinx, Navajo over Native American.
- If not known, use commonly accepted designation (e.g., US census categories)
- DO NOT hyphenate multi-word names (e.g., Asian American, NOT Asian-American)
- Avoid nonparallel designations (e.g., white and African American), instead try to use parallel comparisons (Black people and white people).

Ethnicity: shared cultural characteristics like ancestry, languages, traditions/ practices, beliefs.

Race: social construct, classified people based on inherited physical and behavioral differences.

People of Indigenous origin

- Use Native American for the Indigenous people of the lower 48 states.
 - In certain cases, specify the state; mainly **Alaska Native** or **Hawaiian Native** (capitalized!)
 - If preferred, identify one by one's tribal affiliation (always specify!)
- Capitalize the word "tribe" when it is part of a formal name (eg. the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma). Otherwise, the word can be lowercase.
- Use Indigenous for people originating from or native to a particular land, and whose communities have endured oppression of their people. Broader term, applied worldwide.
- Always capitalize "Indigenous";
 - Capitalize "People" when referring to an ethnic group(e.g., Indigenous Peoples of Canada)
 - Do not capitalize "People" when referring to a group of individuals (e.g., the participants were all Indigenous people)
- Use Pacific Islander for inhabitants/natives of the Pacific Islands or individuals descended from people of Pacific Islands (i.e., subregions of Oceania: Polynesia, Meloneasia, Micronesia).
 - Applicable for Hawaiian Natives, as well as Samoans, Fijians, Papua New Guineans, etc.

For more information see the website for the Indigenous Journalists Association:
<https://indigenousjournalists.org/>

People of African origin

- Do not use “African American” → instead, use “Black” (capitalized!!!)
- For plural, use Black people/students/faculty/etc., unless in a quote (do NOT change quotes)
- Use “African” for people of African descent NOT from the U.S.

For more information see the website for the National association for advancement of colored people: <https://naacp.org/>

People of Asian origin

- Asian American: people of Asian descent from the U.S.
- Asian: people of Asian descent NOT from the U.S.

People of Hispanic/Latinx ethnicity

- Hispanic: people from and/or whose ancestors are from Spanish-speaking land/cultures.
- Latinx: a person of Latin American origin or descent (gendered versions: Latino/Latina). Includes South & Central America, Mexico, and Romance language-speaking Caribbean islands.
 - Difference: People from Brazil can be Latinx but not Hispanic. People from Equatorial Guinea can be called Hispanic (they SPEAK spanish) but are not Latinx.

Information drawn from the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (for more info:
<https://nahj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NAHJ-Cultural-Competence-Handbook.pdf>
)

People of Middle Eastern and North African origin

- Arab: use ONLY if known/self-identified Arab ancestry/origin (i.e., NOT widely applicable to all people of MENA origin).
- Use Arab American if person is from the U.S.

- Specify country of origin (e.g., Iranian American)

Information on Hyphenation

- In general, avoid using hyphen for dual heritage terms
 - <https://aceseditors.org/news/2019/ap-stylebook-adds-new-umbrella-entry-for-race-related-coverage-issues-new-hyphen-guidance-and-other-changes>
- More specific sources:
 - Do not hyphenate Asian American
 - From Asian American Journalist Association: <https://www.aaaja.org/2021/06/11/aaaja-commends-the-new-york-times-decision-to-drop-the-hyphen-in-asian-american/>
 - African American
 - Hyphenate when using African American as an adjective
 - From the National Association of Black Journalists: <https://nabjonline.org/news-media-center/styleguide/#styleguide>

Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC)

- Do not use the term Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)
- <https://www.blackpast.org/blackpast-style-guide-2/>

People of Color

- Generally acceptable term to use as an alternative to “minority”
 - <https://nabjonline.org/news-media-center/styleguide/#styleguidepqrs>
- Do not use the abbreviations POC, BIPOC, or BAME unless necessary in a direct quotation
 - <https://aceseditors.org/news/2021/ap-stylebook-updates-race-related-terms>
- Do not use person of color for an individual
- When you can be specific, avoid using people of color

Other rules

- Do not use “European American” unless that is how the source wants to be identified
- Do not use “Caucasian” → instead, use “white”
- “antisemitism” (NOT anti-semitism, NEVER hyphenated)

- Gypsy → instead, use Romani.
- People of mixed origin = multiracial, multi-ethnic etc. (lowercase for these terms)
- Any non-white group: people of color (POC). Can use 'underrepresented groups' if fits into context, DO NOT use minorities as a single word (if needed, be more specific: ethnic minority, racial minority etc.)
- Keep "brown" lowercase (but it should only be used in a quote). If used outside a quote use people of color/communities of color.

Race & crime coverage

- This is an extremely sensitive area. In crime stories, we only identify the race of an alleged criminal if we are providing specific information on a criminal-at-large: *Police described the mugger as a Latinx male, about 5 feet 8 inches tall, wearing dark trousers and a hat.*
- Never insert the race of a suspect if that is the only detail known. Never write *Police arrested a black male last night after he allegedly stole a toilet seat from Amy Gutmann's office.*
- In many stories, race is not essential and should be left out.
- **If you ever have ANY concerns about whether to include race information, let an editor know!**

People without Housing

- Used "unhoused" rather than "homeless."

Sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression

Sexual orientation. (drawn from <https://glaad.org/reference>)

For more information, refer to this stylebook

<https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook-on-lgbtq-terminology/>

Straight → instead use **heterosexual** (do not imply that only heterosexual people are 'normal')

LGBTQ+: As opposed to just LGBT. If source says LGBT in a quote, use that.

- +: adds recognition to any other non-cisgender non-heterosexual identities, not mentioned in the acronym. Use gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender as necessary (ask, do not assume).

Gay: Use this as opposed to homosexual. Only use queer when it's part of the group's name or someone's identity. Avoid using 'gay' synonymously to the LGBTQ community.

- **Homosexual:** avoid using in general, both as a stand-alone word and in phrases such as 'homosexual relationship'. Replace with same-sex (relationship), or gay/lesbian (couple) etc.

Queer: use with caution, since it is a general term. Always better to specify.

Sexual orientation: as opposed to 'sexual preference'

Pronouns & Gender Identity

Always ask for a source's preferred pronouns. Use a person's preferred pronouns when referring to them in an article. DO NOT simply assume an individual's pronouns and/or gender identity (especially when no prior information is available).

- Use present names/pronouns even when talking about a transgender person in the past
- Never use dead names. Correct incorrect pronouns in quotes. Use brackets.

Gender identity: A person's internal, deeply held knowledge of their own gender.

Gender expression: External manifestations of gender.

Trans-inclusive Language Guide:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_1GpyBnYqsM4KOnqCG4dNjG6DtQvtTG5/view?fbclid=IwAR0BmUvIZ04F1FT_DLVOxYIRUnujPM0yYl8iiaElptanwLTveygXfV9iXN8

Trans Journalists Association Guide: <https://styleguide.transjournalists.org/>

Transgender: someone who identifies with the gender that's not the one assigned at birth. Can use "trans" on second reference.

- It is ok to say *She is a transgender woman* or *She is a trans woman*.
- However, do NOT say *She is a trans*. DO NOT say transgender(-ed).
- DO NOT use transsexual or transvestite (outdated, negative connotation).

Nonbinary: do not hyphenate or abbreviate. NOT mutually exclusive with transgender, however some nonbinary individuals may also identify as transgender (enby is an informal version).

Gender non-confirming: people whose gender expression differs from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity, used irrespective of gender identity.

Gender neutrality in nouns: avoid bias among readers, remove imposed gender-dominance.

- Remove the gender-identifying word with 'person', 'human' (spokesman/spokeswoman → spokesperson, mankind → humankind) OR respective role (e.g., fireman → firefighter, policeman → police officer)

- Rephrase gender-affiliated words when it is not relevant (manpower → workforce or staff)

Mental Health & Disability

- Avoid “descriptions that connote pity” such as “a victim of, suffers from, stricken with” etc.
- Refer to someone’s medical condition or disability only if it’s relevant to the story.
- Whenever mentioning this information, it’s always best to clarify to be correct.

Terms related to disability:

People with disabilities/disabled people: NOT differently-abled people. Avoid using ‘handicapped’. Use ‘disabled’ as an adjective, i.e., with a noun that follows the word.

Person who uses a wheelchair: as opposed to ‘confined to a wheelchair/wheelchair bound’

Accessibility space/accommodations: instead of handicapped space

Caregiver: as opposed to caretaker (one takes care of objects, to people one gives care).

Non-disabled/without a disability: preferred over ‘able-bodied’, although AP style did not officially address it.

Abnormal/abnormalities: use ONLY when talking about a scientific phenomenon/discovery, NOT towards people (especially NOT towards people with disabilities).

Normal: avoid using, utilize ‘typical’ instead (as necessary, look at context).

Specific conditions

Blind: a person with complete loss of sight

person with low vision/limited vision: someone who is not completely blind.

Visually impaired: use with caution, some may object (conditions described as a deficiency)

Partially sighted: mostly used in British sources, less acceptable in the US.

Deaf/hard of hearing: as opposed to ‘hearing impaired’.

Capitalize when referring to the ‘Deaf’ community, lowercase when referring to the condition.

National center on disability journalism style guide: <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>

Addiction/substance misuse

- Addict/user/abuser → person with addiction/substance use disorder (unless mentioned otherwise in quotes, names of organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous)
- Person in recovery/recovering from: someone who is in the process of overcoming addiction
- Substance abuse/problem → risky/excessive/heavy/unhealthy use of XYZ