

# Inclusion

Inclusive apps and games put people first by prioritizing respectful communication and presenting content and functionality in ways that everyone can access and understand.

To help you design an inclusive app or game, consider the following goals as you review the words and images you use and the experiences you offer.

As with all design, designing an inclusive app is an iterative process that takes time to get right. Throughout the process, be prepared to examine your assumptions about how other people think and feel and be open to evolving knowledge and understanding.

## Inclusive by design

Simple, intuitive experiences are at the core of well-designed apps and games. To design an intuitive experience, you start by investigating people's goals and perspectives so you can present content that resonates with them.

Empathy is an important tool in this investigation because it helps you understand how people with different perspectives might respond to the content and experiences you create. For example, you might discover that from some perspectives a word or image is incomprehensible or has a meaning you don't intend.

Although each person's perspective comprises a unique intersection of human qualities that's both distinct and dynamic, all perspectives arise from

human characteristics and experiences that everyone shares, including:

- Age
- Gender and gender identity
- Race and ethnicity
- Sexuality
- Physical attributes
- Cognitive attributes
- Permanent, temporary, and situational disabilities
- Language and culture
- Religion
- Education
- Political or philosophical opinions
- Social and economic context

As you examine your app or game through different perspectives, avoid framing the work as merely a search for content that might give offense. Although no design should contain offensive material or experiences, an inoffensive app or game isn't necessarily an inclusive one. Focusing on inclusion can help you avoid potentially offensive content while also helping you create a welcoming experience that everyone can enjoy.

## [Welcoming language](#)

Using plain, inclusive language welcomes everyone and helps them understand your app or game. Carefully review the writing in your experience to make sure that your tone and words don't exclude people. Here are a few tips for writing text — also known as *copy* — that's direct, easy to understand, and inclusive.

**Consider the tone of your copy from different perspectives.** The style of your writing communicates almost as much as the words you use. Although different apps use different communication styles, make sure the tone you use doesn't send messages you don't intend. For example, an academic tone can make an app or game seem like it welcomes only high levels of education. As you seek the style that's right for your experience, be clear, direct, and respectful.

**Pay attention to how you refer to people.** It typically works well to use *you* and *your* to address people directly. Referring to people indirectly as *the user* or *the player* can make your experience feel distant and unwelcoming. Also, consider reserving words like *we* and *our* to represent your software or company; otherwise, these terms can suggest a personal relationship with people that might be interpreted as insulting or condescending.

**Avoid using specialized or technical terms without defining them.** Using specialized or technical terms can make your writing more succinct, but doing so excludes people who don't know what the terms mean. If you must use such terms, be sure to define them first and make the definitions easy for people to look up. Even when people know the definition of a specialized or technical term in a sentence, the sentence is easier to read — and translate — when it uses plain language instead.

**Replace colloquial expressions with plain language.** Colloquial expressions are often culture-specific and can be difficult to translate.

Worse, some colloquial phrases have exclusionary meanings you might not know. For example, the phrases *peanut gallery* and *grandfathered in* both arose from oppressive contexts and continue to exclude people. Even when a colloquial phrase doesn't have an exclusionary meaning, it can still exclude everyone who doesn't understand it.

**Consider carefully before including humor.** Humor is highly subjective and — similar to colloquial expressions — difficult to translate from one culture to another. Including humor in your experience risks confusing people who don't understand it, irritating people who tire of repeatedly encountering it, and insulting people who interpret it differently. For additional writing guidance, see [Writing inclusively](#).

## Being approachable

An approachable app or game doesn't require people to have particular skills or knowledge before they can use it, and it gives people a clear path toward deepening their understanding over time. Here are two ways to help make an experience approachable.

- Present a clear, straightforward interface. To help you design a simple interface that fits in with other experiences on each platform, see [Designing for iOS](#), [Designing for iPadOS](#), [Designing for macOS](#), [Designing for tvOS](#), [Designing for visionOS](#), [Designing for watchOS](#), and [Designing for games](#).
- Build in ways to learn how to use your app or game. Consider designing an onboarding flow that helps people who are new to your experience take a step-by-step approach while letting others skip straight to the content they want. For guidance, see [Onboarding](#).

## Gender identity

Throughout history, cultures around the world have recognized a spectrum of self-identity and expression that expands beyond the binary variants of woman and man.

You can help everyone feel welcome in your app or game by avoiding unnecessary references to specific genders. For example, a recipe-sharing app that uses copy like “You can let a subscriber post his or her recipes to your shared folder” could avoid unnecessary gender references by using an alternative like “Subscribers can post recipes to your shared folder.” In addition to using the gender-neutral noun “subscribers,” the revised copy avoids the unnecessary singular pronouns “his” and “her,” helping the sentence remain inclusive when it’s localized for languages that use gendered pronouns.

In addition, you can often avoid referencing a specific gender in an avatar, emoji, glyph, or game character. To welcome everyone to your app or game, prefer giving people the tools they need to customize such items as they choose.

If you need to depict a generic person or people, use a nongendered human image to reinforce the message that *generic person* means *human*, not *man* or *woman*. SF Symbols provides many nongendered glyphs you can use, such as the figure and person symbols shown here:

person.crop.circle

person.3.fill

figure.wave

Most apps and games don’t need to know a person’s gender, but if you require this information — such as for health or legal reasons — consider

providing inclusive options, such as *nonbinary*, *self-identify*, and *decline to state*. In this situation, you could also let people specify the pronouns they use so you can address them properly when necessary.

## People and settings

Portraying human diversity is one of the most noticeable ways your app or game can welcome everyone. When people recognize others like themselves within an experience and its related materials, they're less likely to feel excluded and can be more likely to think they'll benefit from it.

As you create copy and images that represent people, portray a range of human characteristics and activities. For example, a fitness app could feature exercise moves demonstrated by people with different racial backgrounds, body types, ages, and physical capabilities. If you need to depict occupations or behaviors, avoid stereotypical representations, such as showing only male doctors, female nurses, or heroes and villains that may perpetuate real-world racial or gender stereotypes.

Also review the settings and objects you show. For example, showing high levels of affluence might make sense in some scenarios, but in other cases it can be unwelcoming and make an experience seem out of touch. When it makes sense in your app or game, prefer showing places, homes, activities, and items that are familiar and relatable to most people.

## Avoiding stereotypes

Everyone holds biases and stereotypes — often unconsciously — and it can be challenging to discover how they affect your thoughts. A goal of inclusive design is to become aware of your biases and generalizations so you can recognize where they might influence your design decisions.

For example, consider an app that helps people manage account access for various family members. If this app uses a stereotypical definition of *family* — such as a woman, a man, and their biological children — it's likely to communicate this perspective in its copy and images. Because the app assumes that people's families fit this narrow definition, it excludes everyone whose family is different.

Although the assumption made in the account-access app might seem like an obvious mistake, it's important to realize that not all assumptions are so easy to spot. For example, consider an app or game that requires people to choose security questions they can answer for future identity confirmation, such as:

- What was your favorite subject in college?
- What was the make of your first car?
- How did you feel when you first saw a rainbow?

From some perspectives these questions refer to commonplace events, but all are based on experiences that not everyone has. Using a context-specific experience to communicate something is useless for everyone who doesn't share that context and effectively excludes them. To create alternatives to the culture- and capability-specific questions above, you might reference more universal human experiences like:

- What's your favorite activity?
- What was the name of your first friend?
- What quality describes you best?

Basing design decisions on stereotypes or assumptions inevitably leads to

exclusion because generalizations can't reflect the diversity of human perspectives. Avoiding assumptions and instead concentrating on inclusion can help you craft experiences that benefit everyone.

## Accessibility

An inclusive app or game is accessible to everyone. People rely on Apple's accessibility features — such as VoiceOver, Display Accommodations, closed captioning, Switch Control, and Speak Screen — to customize their devices for their individual needs, so it's essential to support these features.

It's also essential to avoid assuming that any disability might prevent someone from wanting to enjoy the experience your software provides. Making an assumption like this can result in designs that limit the potential audience for your app or game. In contrast, when you make each experience accessible, you give everyone the opportunity to benefit from your app or game in ways that work for them.

To help you design an app or game that everyone can enjoy, remember that:

- Each disability is a spectrum. For example, visual disabilities range from low vision to complete blindness, and include things like color blindness, blurry vision, light sensitivity, and peripheral vision loss.
- Everyone can experience disabilities. In addition to disabilities that most people experience as they age, there are *temporary disabilities* — like short-term hearing loss due to an infection — and *situational disabilities* — like being unable to hear while on a noisy train — that can affect everyone at various times.

As you design content that welcomes people of all abilities, consider the following tips.



**Avoid images and language that exclude people with disabilities.** For example, include people with disabilities when you represent a variety of people, and avoid language that uses a disability to express a negative quality.

**Take a people-first approach when writing about people with disabilities.** For example, you could describe an individual's accomplishments and goals before mentioning a disability they may have. If you're writing about a specific person or community, find out how they self-identify; for more guidance, see [Writing about disability](#).

**Prioritize simplicity and perceivability.** Prefer familiar, consistent interactions that make tasks simple to perform, and ensure that everyone can perceive your content, whether they use sight, hearing, or touch.

To learn more about making your app or game accessible, see [Accessibility](#).

## [Languages](#)

People expect to customize their device by choosing a language for text and a region for formatting values like date, time, and money. To welcome a global audience, first prepare your software to handle languages and regions other than your own — a process called *internationalization* — and provide translated text and resources for specific locales. For an overview of internationalization, see [Expanding your app to new markets](#); for developer guidance on localization, see [Localization](#).

Creating an inclusive experience can also help you prepare for localization. For example, using plain language, avoiding unnecessary gender references, representing a variety of people, and avoiding stereotypes and culture-specific content, can put you in a good position to create versions of your software localized into more languages. Using [SF Symbols](#) for the glyphs in

your app or game can also help streamline localization. In addition to providing many language-specific glyphs, SF Symbols includes glyphs you can use in both left-to-right and right-to-left contexts; for guidance, see [Right to left](#).

As you localize your app or game and related content, also be aware of the ways you use color. Colors often have strong culture-specific meanings, so it's essential to discover how people respond to specific colors in each locale you support. In some places, for example, white is associated with death or grief, whereas in other places, it's associated with purity or peace. If you use color as a way to communicate, make sure your color choices communicate the same thing in each version of your software.

## [\*\*Platform considerations\*\*](#)

*No additional considerations for iOS, iPadOS, macOS, tvOS, visionOS, or watchOS.*

## [\*\*Resources\*\*](#)

### [\*\*Related\*\*](#)

[Writing inclusively](#)

[Accessibility](#)

### [\*\*Developer documentation\*\*](#)

[Localization](#) — Xcode

### [\*\*Videos\*\*](#)

[Principles of inclusive app design](#)

[The practice of inclusive design](#)

[The process of inclusive design](#)