

Make Your Documentation Inclusive

10 Strategies You Need to
Welcome New Users to Your Product



from *The Responsible Communication Style Guide*



10 Ways to Improve Your Inclusivity

1. Challenge your own implicit biases. We all subconsciously rank people based on factors we don't ever pay attention to (like the way a hiring manager will automatically treat resumes differently, just based on the name at the top).
2. Use inclusive language. Start out with small tweaks to your documentation, like removing claims that the product is "so easy even your mother can figure it out." A lot of moms are programmers, engineers, and even astronauts.
3. Make sure you're listening to people from a variety of backgrounds. Check both your professional and personal social media accounts to see if you're following people of color, folks covering accessibility, and generally people with a different worldview than your own.
4. Try out the products you're documenting with users from different backgrounds and with different needs. If you've never watched someone use an app with an assistive device, you don't know what questions they have.
5. Use your documentation to amplify voices. Whether you're writing internal documentation covering accessibility or choosing examples to use externally, include voices that don't always get heard. That means people from marginalized backgrounds, but it also means junior developers, non-technical contributors and others.



6. Moderate your communities, including help forums. Your audience assumes you agree with any statement that you don't remove, so if someone is posting racist slurs or other offensive language, you need to remove it or disassociate your company as quickly as possible.
7. Improve your security and discuss it openly, so that your users feel safe (as well as comfortable giving you more information). Online harassment is an ongoing issue, which leads people to avoid sites and platforms where they feel unsafe.
8. Discuss inclusivity with other teams in your company. Setting an inclusive tone with your documentation has to be matched across marketing, support, and other communications. Anything written down or recorded may become public, which means internal documentation and communications need to match.
9. Prioritize hiring folks with different backgrounds. Just having a diverse team has been demonstrated to increase sales through multiple studies. This holds true across documentation teams, as well as technical teams.
10. Keep educating yourself. Just as you read up on the newest social media platform, make time to learn about diversity and inclusivity. Read books, watch videos, and talk with people about these topics.



You Need an Inclusive Approach to Documentation

Inclusivity needs to be **baked in**, not sprinkled on top after you've finished a blog post, a tutorial, or a new feature's write up. You need the tools and infrastructure to make this part of your work automatic.

The Responsible Communication Style Guide is the first tool you should add to your toolbox. This style guide focuses on creating **consistent, inclusive work across all the content you produce**, as well as including resources for how to specifically talk about topics like race and gender in technology.

Based on best practices for media creators of all types, the team behind *The Responsible Communication Style Guide* even offers onsite training to help you bring the rest of your team (or company) up to speed.

Pre-order your copy of *The Responsible Communication Style Guide* and make sure to check out the Write the Docs speakers who are also contributors:

- Heidi Waterhouse (Workshop: Structuring and writing documentation)
- Lyzi Diamond (Testing: it's not just for code anymore)
- Melissa Chavez (Unconference Session: Worst-case Scenario Planning)

You can pre-order *The Responsible Communication Style Guide* at

<https://shop.recompilermag.com/collections/books/products/pre-order-the-responsible-communication-style-guide>

(Shortened link: <https://goo.gl/M0N1gK>)