

Resources for Inclusive Language

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At the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild, we want to make sure our word choices are as uplifting and inclusive as possible because words are powerful. The following resources are to educate and assist writers and editors in being aware of words, phrases, descriptions, etc. that could be harmful to readers and to assist in suggesting alternatives to writers so that the writing is not harmful. Please note that we do not have any partnerships with the organizations or people whose guides and information we link to in this resource, nor is this document an exhaustive list. There is always more learning we can all do and continue to do; therefore, this guide will be a living document.

When reading something potentially problematic, consider:

- Matter of voice and context—previous writers have justified harmful language because “stuff like that is said still in society.” Ask yourself: is the potentially harmful language intentional and for a purpose? What is the purpose? Does it land in the way the writer wants? Will this cause further harm to marginalized communities if read instead of educating people that x word/phrase is harmful?
- Dialogue can be tricky because of questions of voice vs. authorial intention; however, then consider the above questions when tackling dialogue as well.
- Speak with compassion to the writer and gently educate them
- Encouraging writers to use more creative language
- Teaching writers that language evolves and that there are other ways to communicate x word/phrase without using the word/phrase with problematic roots/connotations
- You can't know everything, so be open to learning and/or unlearning

Inclusive Language Guides & Resources

- <https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/inclusive-language-resources/>
- <https://www.sfu.ca/communicators-toolkit/guides/Editorial-style-guide/language-and-grammar/inclusive-language.html>
- <https://www.rabbitwitharedpen.com/conscious-language>
- <https://www.rabbitwitharedpen.com/conscious-language-toolkit-for-writers>
- <https://www.rabbitwitharedpen.com/conscious-language-toolkit-for-editors>

Anti-Ableist Language Guides & Resources

- <https://www.autistichoya.com/p/ableist-words-and-terms-to-avoid.html>
- Avoid referring to a disabled person as “differently abled” or “multiply abled” or any such similar alternative.

- If a writer using “inspirational” language when describing a disabled character, such as “x is an inspiration” or “brave” or “amazing” for doing everyday things, suggest an alternative as this is an ableist practice.
- If a writer says “wheelchair bound”, suggest they change it to “wheelchair user” because folks who use wheelchairs are not bound; wheelchairs are mobility aids that give freedom of movement to folks who use them.
- Also avoid the term “cripple(d)” when talking about something that a character struggles with or is hurt by. If a writer is disabled and is using “cripple(d)” to reclaim the word for themselves, then that is up to the discretion of the writer and editor.
- Some more terms commonly used that reflect casual ableism are “blind” / “blinded by ___” and “deaf to ___” or “tone deaf”. Avoid using these terms negatively, as blind or low vision and d/Deaf folks live rich lives and have rich cultures and it is not a negative thing to be d/Deaf or blind or low vision.
- Take note of the differences between person-first (person with a disability) and identity-first (disabled person) language, as both of these are valid and up to the individual. However, many folks prefer identity-first language.
 - Identity-first language: <https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/identity-first-language/>

Anti-racist Language Guides

- <https://lib.arizona.edu/employees/anti-racist-guide>
- <https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing/inclusive-antiracist-writing/bipoc>
- If a writer writes a description that alludes to or describes skin colour or any body part using food, please suggest another description. Describing using food has racist connotations.
- Be aware of any racialized stereotypes being employed and work to correct it.
- <https://www.feminuity.org/post/using-bve-as-a-non-black-person-is-appropriation>

Inclusive 2SLGBTQIAP+ Language Guides

- <https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing/inclusive-antiracist-writing/gender-identity-sexual-orientation>
- <https://pronouns.org/inclusivelanguage>
- <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/02/996319297/gender-identity-pronouns-expression-guide-lgbtq>
- On Pronouns: <https://pronouns.org/what-and-why/>
 - Most common pronouns: she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs
 - Neopronouns: ey/em/eirs, ze/zir/zirs
 - Some folks use their names, not a pronoun. For example, Becky/Becky’s (Eg. Becky wanted to go to the store because Becky was hungry and needed more groceries. Becky’s fridge was also getting empty)
 - Some folks may use “rolling pronouns”, which means they use more than one set of pronouns and they can be used alternately in a sentence(s)

(<https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2022/08/incomplete-list-gender-pronouns/>). Eg. Max's pronouns are she/her/they/them/he/him

- This resource gives an (incomplete) list of all pronouns:
<https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2022/08/incomplete-list-gender-pronouns/>
- When referring to someone's pronouns, do not say "preferred" pronoun; instead, just say "their pronouns" or the like. Saying something is "preferred" when it relates to identity is demeaning.
- When editing someone's work, pay attention to the pronouns used within the work. If there are shifting pronouns, ask the writer if they are trying to make the character have rolling pronouns or if they had meant to change the pronouns of their characters. A reminder that singular "they" is valid, recognized by style guides, and can be used in writing.

Some examples that previous SWG editors (from our various publications) caught:

- "Lame attempt"
 - Alternatives: Bad attempt, unsuccessful,
- "Willful blindness"
 - Alternatives: willful ignorance, inexperience, lack of experience, innocence
- "I might go crazy"
 - Alternatives: I might not make it; I might not survive
- "No colour – only browns and beige"
 - Alternatives: dull eyes and clothes
- Dumb
 - Alternatives: specific context of story: can't read them; other alternatives: thoughtless