



Using more accurate and inclusive language

some ideas for being more intentional with our words

www.du.edu/studentlife/ie-education

Language is dynamic and value-laden; it grows, changes, and continuously impacts lives and experiences. As respectful individuals, intelligent people, and dutiful professionals, we all should strive to be sure that our language is both accurate and inclusive, and that it does not demean, exclude or wrongly characterize.

Below are just *some* examples of how more thoughtful and intentional choice in words can better demonstrate your understanding of our social realities, and can better describe our communities, relationships and collaborations.

Note: This list is not comprehensive. Not everyone will agree with the examples or explanations given. And it is not a prohibition on certain terms/phrases. Rather, **we offer this resource as a starting place to challenge ourselves and others in deepening our understanding of one another, and applying our critical thinking and communication skills.**

Rather than...	Use this instead:	Because:
America; Americans	The United States, US or USA; US residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While most in the US (and beyond) will assume USA, the USA is only one of >3 dozen nations in the Americas (North, Central and South). Thus, millions of people outside the USA are also "Americans."
assuming pronouns; s/he; she or he	Ask, and offer yours. "They."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't assume/assign gender to others. Save effort from listing all options, or reinforcing binary. They as singular pronoun was used by Shakespeare; it's been in English language much longer than word "telephone."
citizens; citizenship	community members; residents; DU affiliates	In today's immigration debate climate, this term evokes legal status judgments whether or not you mean to. Avoid, unless you literally are focused on that formal Constitutional standing.
crazy, retarded, lame, gay, ...	use more accurate, specific and objective words to describe the situation, object, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using terms that have been (and are) applied negatively to groups of people perpetuates that association. They're usually technically inaccurate: How exactly does the book you don't like experience same-gender attraction? Can suggest you have lazy thinking or limited vocabulary.
freshman, freshmen	first year students, frosh	Not all students are men.
gyp	ripoff, shortchange, defraud	Derived from "gypsy," the Roma or Romani people of Europe. Similar to "Indian giver" and "jew down," it equates a people with dishonesty, excessive frugality and undesirability.
kids	students, young adults	We don't enroll children, or young goats.
ladies and gentlemen	everyone, welcome guests, participants, attendees	Avoids gender binary, or assertion of what social standing/qualities/behaviors you're expecting.
men and women; boys, girls; brothers, sisters	people; children; youth; young adults; siblings, kin	Shorter, simpler, avoids unnecessary and potentially inaccurate gendering.
mothers and fathers (etc)	parents, family; support systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families are diverse. There are mom+dad families, mom or dad families, mom+mom, dad+dad, grandparents, guardians, and even no parent situations... Support systems encompasses a broader range of family, friends, etc who contribute to the students' success

Rather than...	Use this instead:	Because:
see website or person X...	visit, check...	Conveys same meaning without focusing on vision ability.
next steps	next moves	Conveys same meaning without focusing on walking ability.
spirit animal	favorite, resonates strongly with me	Cultural appropriated term that incorrectly represents and makes light of sacred beliefs, especially as it's often used lightly, comically, hyperbolically.
work study students	student staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all student staff are funded by work study programs. • Labeling students by funding source can out their financial aid status, and thus be a privacy and FERPA violation. • Budget source labelling for any employee is unnecessary in most situations. (Don't have "fee staff" or "tuition faculty" ...)

Some additional readings/resources:

- www.statepress.com/article/2017/03/spopinion-sgraphic-intentional-wording-matters
- thestamp.umd.edu/multicultural_involvement_community_advocacy/programs/inclusive_language
- www.autistichoya.com/p/ableist-words-and-terms-to-avoid.html
- everydayfeminism.com/2015/08/alternatives-to-oppressive-language/
- www.care2.com/causes/40-alternatives-to-these-ableist-and-oppressive-words.html
- www.upworthy.com/the-10-phrases-ive-stopped-saying-and-the-people-who-appreciate-me-for-it
- Universal Design (broader inclusion intentionality): www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl

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