



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary of Terms

When in doubt, just ask!

Etiquette and understanding in the space of diversity, equity, and inclusion is rapidly evolving and critical when communicating with clients and prospects. For this reason, it's important to be mindful that every person has a unique perspective based on their education, age, personal beliefs, and lived experience. While this guide provides examples of how we think

it most respectful to communicate, it's important to remain curious and ask questions.

We believe that by using respectful and inclusive language in our communications, we can show each other, our clients, and our prospects that we care about the way we talk to and about one another.

DEI—Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DEI stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Diversity:** This term describes the many social and cultural backgrounds, as well as lived experiences, in a community. This includes physical ability, race and ethnicity, sex and gender, sexuality, age, religion, and more.
- **Equity:** This term describes an effort to ensure all people have equal access to opportunity, an equal ability to contribute, and a way to be involved. It means providing resources in a way that gives everyone the same level of access in the end.
- **Inclusion:** This term describes the practice of ensuring everyone has a sense of belonging in a community. This means making sure everyone has a seat at the table and feels empowered and supported.

Race and Ethnicity

In most instances, it is not necessary to identify people by race because it can draw unnecessary and unwanted attention to someone's race or ethnicity. However, in instances where race is crucial to an event, first ask the subject matter expert how they would like to be identified. Here are a few terms to know:

- **Black:** This term reflects a shared identity and culture, rather than skin color. It is used as an adjective in a racial, ethnic, or cultural sense, i.e., Black people or Black culture. African American is acceptable when referring to Americans who are of African descent.

- **BIPOC:** An acronym for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (pronounced: buy-pock). This is sometimes preferred over "racial minority," "minorities," or "people of color."
- **American Indians, Native Americans:** These terms refer to two or more people of different tribal affiliations. For an individual, use the name of the tribe. Never shorten to "Indian," which refers to people from the south Asian country India. For language that this community prefers to avoid, [visit Native Circle](#).
- **Asian American:** This term refers to Americans who are of Asian descent. When possible, use a person's country of origin, such as Chinese American or Indian American. Do not use "orient" or "oriental," as these are perceived as derogatory.
- **Hispanic:** This term refers to people who are from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking country.
- **Latina/Latino/Latinx:** These terms refer to people who are from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking country in Latin America. Latina is the feminine version, Latino is masculine, and Latinx is gender neutral. These can be used as a noun or an adjective (i.e., "She's Latina" or "She's a Latina writer"). For mixed-gender groups, use the plural Latinos.
- **multiracial, biracial:** This term refers to large, diverse groups of people with more than one racial heritage. It should be used only when clearly relevant and stated first by the individual.

- **white people:** This term refers to skin color, rather than a shared identity. People who are white do not always share the same history or culture or experience being discriminated against because of their skin color.

Sex and Gender

As with race and ethnicity, sometimes what others see on the outside does not reflect the truth of who we are and how we identify. Disclosure is very personal and doing so has the potential to put a person in physical or psychological danger.

- **gender/gender identity:** This term refers to a person's individual inner sense of being, based on their personal, social, physical, psychological, and emotional traits. Gender identity is a spectrum. In a binary, there are men and women. But in the lived experience of many people, there are many more, including nonbinary, gender fluid, queer, and gender-nonconforming.
- **pronouns:** Pronouns are nouns we use to reflect a person's gender identity. Binary pronouns are she/her and he/him. Nonbinary pronouns are they/them. Consider asking how a person would like to be identified.
- **cis gender:** This term refers to a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth. Example: I am female (sex), and I identify as a woman (gender).
- **transgender or trans:** This term refers to people whose sex or gender assigned at birth does not reflect their inner sense of being. A transgender person can be a transgender man, transgender woman, transgender nonbinary, or simply identify as trans. A person may or may not identify themselves as transgender. It is up to each person to decide whether to disclose, when to do so, and to whom they disclose to.
- **sex:** This term refers to the differences in reproductive organs and function and has three categories: male, female, and intersex. A person is typically assigned their sex at birth based on external physiological characteristics and/or chromosome composition.

For more, [see Medical News Today](#) or [see Lamda Legal](#).

Sexuality or Sexual Orientation

In many instances, identifying a person by their sexuality or sexual orientation is not necessary and has the potential to offend or put the individual in danger. For this reason, it is always necessary to get consent before sharing such details whether public or private.

- **sexual orientation:** This term describes an individual's physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. This is not the same as gender identity (see Sex and Gender). Never use the term "sexual preference."
- **LGBTQ+:** An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The + symbol represents others in the community that may not fall under the named categories, including those who are queer, asexual, or allies. For more, [see Lamda Legal](#).
- **straight:** This term refers to a person who is heterosexual, or whose sexual and affectional attraction is to someone of the opposite sex or gender.

Disability

It's not typically necessary to disclose or name a person's disability. Generally speaking, there are two ways to talk about disabled people:

- **Identity-first language:** This type of language is generally preferred in disability culture. For example, in deaf culture, in the blind community, and in the autistic community. In this language, disability is named first. Example: disabled person, autistic person, neurodivergent person, deaf person, blind person, amputee.
- **Person-first language:** This type of language centers personhood over a person's disability. For example, "a person with a disability." Many disabled people find this language offensive because it implies that someone's "personhood" can be forgotten if it's not named first.

Here are a few other terms to know:

- **Nondisabled:** This term describes someone who does not identify as having a disability.
- **Disabled:** (adjective) This term describes someone who identifies as having a disability.
- **Ableism:** This term describes discrimination in favor of able-bodied (or nondisabled) people.
- **Neurotypical:** This adjective describes people whose brain behaves in the same way as the majority of society.

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