



Tips on Using Inclusive Language

Acknowledge Oppression as Current and Ongoing

Why? Because oppression IS current and ongoing, and refusing to acknowledge this may alienate readers who have experienced oppression.

| Example of Language that May Not Be Inclusive | Why it May Feel Non-inclusive | Suggested Revision to be More Inclusive |
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| "The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s solved racism in the United States." "The United States became a post-racial society when Barack Obama was elected president." | While racism has changed form over time, it still persists in the present. Readers who are aware of this will feel ignored and dismissed. | "The Civil Rights Movement was an important development in the United States' continuous fight against racism." |
| "Sexism was a bad problem in the past." | Sexism is also still a problem. Statements like these dismiss the enduring nature of bigotry which people continue to endure. | "Some common identifiers of sexism throughout history have been..." "Sexism is a constantly-evolving problem..." |

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| <p>“Things were better in the good old days . . .”</p> | <p>Better for who? Better how? Cliches about the past hide many things that were worse.</p> | <p>Avoid phrases like these.</p> |
| <p>“Never again will we allow such hateful acts in our country to go unpunished.”</p> | <p>When discussing current events, such statements seem hopeful but can also do harm. It provides the writer a “safe” distance from which to compartmentalize these acts as “history,” something separate and finished, instead of allowing the writer to take an active stance on the matter. Similar to the first example.</p> <p>[Also see “Consider the Audience”]</p> | <p>State/argue specifically what should be done to hold the perpetrators of the hateful acts accountable instead of using vague sentiments.</p> <p>“The U.S. legal system needs to make clearer guidelines on what counts as a hate crime so that . . .”</p> |

Brown, Shan-Estelle and Mandy Suhr-Sytsma. Addressing the Everyday Language of Oppression in the Writing Center. Weblog. 21 Oct. 2008. Web. 25 May 2011.

Debczak, Michele. “Merriam-Webster Is Updating Its Definition of Racism to Emphasize Systemic Prejudice.” Mental Floss, Microsoft News, 16 June 2020, www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/merriam-webster-is-updating-its-definition-of-racism-to-emphasize-systemic-prejudice/ar-BB15zyko.

