



A beginner's guide to Inclusive Language in the workplace

In the workplace everyone should feel safe, welcomed, and free to be ourselves.

What is Inclusive Language?

Inclusive language acknowledges diversity, showing respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equitable opportunities. It aims to avoid expressions or words that might exclude, marginalise, or insult people based on characteristics such as gender, race, disability, or sexual orientation. Using inclusive language helps create a welcoming environment for everyone.

Why is it Important?

- Promotes Diversity and Inclusion – it reflects a commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace culture.
- Enhances communication- it reduces misunderstandings and barriers to communication.
- Builds a supportive environment – it encourages a sense of belonging and support for all employees.
- Reflects professionalism and respect – it demonstrates respect and professionalism in interactions.



Examples of Inclusive Language in the Workplace

Gender Neutrality

Instead of "Chairman" use "Chair" or "Chairperson".

Use "they/them" pronouns when you're unsure of someone's gender, or better yet, ask for their pronouns.

Instead of "salesman" or "saleswoman," use "salesperson" or "sales representative."

Cultural sensitivity

Use terms that respect all cultural backgrounds (e.g., instead of "mother tongue," use "first language" or "native language").

Neutral family references

Instead of assuming everyone has a "husband" or "wife," use "partner" or "spouse" to be inclusive of all types of relationships.

Use "parents" or "guardians" instead of assuming a traditional family structure with "mother and father."

Mental Health awareness

Avoid using terms like "crazy" or "insane" to describe situations or people. Instead, use "unbelievable" or "surprising."

Be cautious with phrases that trivialise mental health conditions, e.g., saying someone is "being OCD" about cleanliness. Instead, say "very attentive to detail."



Disability awareness

Use "person-first" language (e.g., "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person").

Use "wheelchair user" instead of "confined to a wheelchair," emphasising the person's autonomy.

If you're unsure of the preferred terminology, please ask the person. Always be open to learning individual preferences.

Age Inclusivity

Avoid terms that might be patronising based on age (e.g., "youngster").

Instead of calling someone "young" or "old," focus on the person's accomplishments or role without reference to age.

Avoid phrases that assume capability based on age, such as "digital natives" for younger employees or implying older employees can't adapt to new technologies.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

Use terms like "partner" or "spouse" instead of assuming marital status or gender.

Respect and use an individual's self-identified gender and pronouns.

Implementing Inclusive Language

Adopting inclusive language is a step towards building a more respectful, welcoming workplace. It's about recognising the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of all employees and ensuring that everyone feels valued and included.



Remember, inclusive language is a journey, not a destination. It's about making a commitment to continuous learning and improvement to ensure our workplace is welcoming and respectful for everyone.

Additional Support Materials

Alongside this module, please also take a look at the handy tools and guides that we have on ERNIE under the **Equality, Diversity and Dignity at Work module**: <https://intranet.edenfutures.org/index.php/edenevolve/>