

## Avoiding Biased Language in APA Style

See the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) for more information on reducing bias in your writing style.

For additional support on APA style refer to the Purdue OWL website:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

### A. Gender

- a. Avoid the confusing gender with sex  
AVOID: It was participants' sex (whether they were women, men, or nonbinary), not their sexual orientation, that affected number of friendships  
USE: *gender*  
It was participants' gender (whether they were women, men, or nonbinary), not their sexual orientation, that affected number of friendships.
- b. Do not use "man" when referring to humans. Use a more including term  
AVOID: *man, mankind, man power, man's search for knowledge*  
USE: *people, humanity, humankind, human species*
- c. Specific nouns reduce the possibility of stereotypes and bias  
AVOID: *males, females*  
USE: *men, women, boys, girls*

### B. Sexual Orientation:

- a. Use *lesbian, gay man, bisexual man, and bisexual woman* instead of *homosexual* to allow for increased specificity.
- b. Terminology depends on the self-identification of individuals

### C. Racial and Ethnic Identity

- a. Capitalize terms such as *Black* and *White*.
- b. Do not hyphenate terms such as *African American* or *Asian American*.
- c. Use terms that indicate a specific country of origin whenever possible instead of more generalizing terms. For example, use *Cuban* or *Chinese* instead of *Hispanic* or *Asian*.
- d. Use terms like *Indigenous People, American Indian, Native American, or Native North American*. When possible, use the specific names of the tribes.
- e. Refrain from using outdated terms

### D. Disabilities

- a. Use people-first language:  
AVOID: *disabled person*  
USE: *person with a disability. a person with autism.*
- b. Avoid the following: *crippled, retarded, invalid, special, handi-capable.*
- c. Always use the person before naming their disability

### E. Age

- a. Use *girl* or *boy* when referring to children under the age of 12.
- b. Use *young woman, young man, female adolescent, or male adolescent* when referring to people between 13-17 years of age.

- c. Use *women* or *men* when referring to individuals over the age of 18.
- d. Use *older adults* instead of the *elderly* or *senior*.  
AVOID: *the elderly, elders, seniors, senior citizens, aging dependents*  
USE: *older adult, older people, persons 65 and older, the older population*

Information was obtained from the American Psychological Association.

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Bias-free language*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved October 14, 2021, from <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language>.

Updated by Abby Magnuson, 2021

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The College of Saint Rose, 2012

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