

[View in Browser](#)

Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

Using Inclusive Language in Scientific Writing

When writing about medical or scientific research involving people, it is important to use inclusive language to support diversity, convey respect, and reduce unintentional bias. Because inclusive language has evolved over time, it can be challenging to keep up with the latest recommendations. The American Medical Association (AMA) recently updated its guidance of inclusive language for reporting demographic and clinical characteristics; it is available on the *JAMA* Network website as a [summary guide](#) that includes examples. Further explanations and references can be found in [chapter 11 \(Correct and Preferred Usage\)](#) of the AMA Manual of Style, 11th edition. Here we provide excerpts and examples from the AMA guidance.

Preferred Terms for Reporting Race and Ethnicity

When writing about race and ethnicity, the language used must be accurate, clear, and precise, and it must reflect fairness, equity, and consistency.

- Write out "race and ethnicity" rather than using "race/ethnicity."
- Capitalize words describing race and ethnicity (e.g., "Alaska Native," "Asian," "Black," "White").
- Avoid using the term "Native American." It is preferable to use "American Indian," "Alaska Native," or a specific category (e.g., "Native Hawaiian," "Pacific Islander").
- Do not present race and ethnicity as nouns (e.g., "Whites," "Blacks," "Asians"). Instead use these terms as a modifier (e.g., "Asian patient," "Black individual," "White populations") or as a predicate adjective (e.g., "patients who are Black" or "the patients were Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White").
- List races in alphabetical order in the text and tables (e.g., "Asian, Black, Hispanic, White"); "other" and "unknown" should be listed last.
- In the Methods section, explain who identified study participant race and ethnicity and the source of the classifications used (e.g., "self-reported or selection," "investigator observed," "database," "electronic health record," "survey").
- In the Results section, report race and ethnicity categories of the study population.
- When using collective terms to describe populations (e.g., "other"), define or state if the terms were predefined in a study or database.
- Some collective terms, such as the abbreviated term for "Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)" or "non-White," may be considered "too inclusive," in that differences among specific groups are not evident. Use these terms only if they are included in a database used for the study or are specified in a survey or other research data collection instrument.
- Do not use the term "minority" or "minorities" as a standalone noun, as these terms are vague and imply a hierarchy among groups. Instead, include a modifier with these terms (e.g., "racial and ethnic minority groups").
- The terms "underserved populations" (when referring to health disparities among groups) or "underrepresented populations" (when referring to a disproportionately low number of individuals in a workforce or educational program) may be used, provided the categories of individuals included are defined when first mentioned in the text.

Inclusive language for gender, gender identity, and sex

- Gender, gender identity, and sex are terms that may overlap but have different meanings. If possible, avoid using these terms interchangeably.
- Use "sex" when reporting biological factors and "gender" when reporting gender identity or psychosocial/cultural factors.
- In studies that address pregnancy, if the gender identity of participants was not assessed, use the term "pregnant participants," "pregnant individuals," or "pregnant patients."
- Adults can be described as "men" or "women" if their gender was collected or reported. If their sex or gender is not known, referring to them as "individuals," "people," "participants," or "patients" is preferred.

Pronouns

- Avoid using sex- or gender-specific pronouns when specificity is not relevant.
- When referring to individuals whose pronouns are known, use the person's identified pronoun (e.g., "she/her/hers," "he/him/his," "they/them/theirs").
- The singular "they" may be used when referring to individuals whose pronouns are not known.
- Refer to pronouns as "identified pronouns," "self-identified pronouns," or "pronouns," rather than "preferred pronouns" or "chosen pronouns."

Sexual orientation

- It is preferable to use sexual orientation terms as adjectives and not nouns (e.g., "gay men," "bisexual individuals").
- It is acceptable to use the term "lesbian" as a noun or an adjective.

Upcoming Opportunities

Have a question about writing grants or research articles? [Email us your question and we'll answer it in a future newsletter.](#)

Write Winning Grant Proposals - Phase I Seminar

Thursday, October 26, 8:30 am

The Research Development Office (RDO) in the Office of the Vice President for Research is pleased to partner with Dr. John Robertson from Grant Writers' Seminars & Workshops (GWSW) to conduct the Write Winning Grant Proposals seminar.

[Find more information and register](#)

Expand Your Collaborative Networks

Are you interested in expanding your collaborative networks around certain topics? Then check out the RDO Networking Surveys. The RDO has created a set of Networking Surveys to help facilitate collaborations by making it easier to share your interests and find others with complementary interests. This collected information is being posted online, so that you can easily communicate with others as desired.

[View the Networking Survey Directory](#)

Improve Your Writing and Speaking Skills

Are you looking for methods to improve your success in writing, grant applications, and speaking endeavors? If so, take part in an in-person three-part series designed to provide you with strategies to improve the clarity of your scholarly communications, both written and oral. The series is presented by [Paul Casella](#) (MFA; Consultant, CCOM Office of Faculty Affairs and Development). Each session will be held in Room 2520D at the University Capitol Centre.

[Register here](#) for one or more of the following sessions:

Writing for Publication

Wednesday, July 12, 11:00 am-12:00 pm

A clear and reasoned presentation of ideas is critical to the success of a scientific manuscript. This seminar examines the structure and positions of emphasis in sentences, paragraphs, and sections of a manuscript. This session will also address how authors can use a systematic approach to the writing process to improve the content and presentation of their ideas. This includes suggestions on how to address the needs of the reviewers, editors, and readers of a journal to improve your chances of publication.

Writing Effective NIH Grant Applications

Wednesday, July 19, 11:00 am-12:00 pm

This course reviews the principles of good grant writing to produce clear, direct, and compelling proposals. The session focuses on understanding the psychology of reviewers and the review process, how to engage readers and facilitate understanding, and how to manage the proposal writing process. This session also suggests

Age discrimination and patient stereotypes

- Avoid labelling people with their disabilities or diseases (e.g., "epileptics"). Instead use person-first language (e.g., "patients with epilepsy").
- Avoid using collective terms to describe the age of populations (e.g., "seniors," "elderly") without defining the age of the individual or the age range of the group (e.g., "adults older than 65 years," "patients aged 80 to 95 years"). Collective terms can be used if the age range is defined when the term is first mentioned.
- Avoid euphemistic descriptors, such as "physically challenged," "special," or "special needs."

The examples above represent only a small portion of the full AMA guidance on inclusive language. Check the following resources for detailed information and other examples.

- [Inclusive Language for Reporting Demographic and Clinical Characteristics](#) (*JAMA* Network website)
- [Chapter 11 \(Correct and Preferred Usage\), AMA Manual of Style, 11th Edition: A Guide for Authors and Editors](#) (*JAMA* Network website)
- Flanagan A, Frey T, Christiansen SL, AMA Manual of Style Committee. [Updated Guidance on the Reporting of Race and Ethnicity in Medical and Science Journals](#). *JAMA*. 2021;326(7):621–627. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.13304
- [Style Guide: People with Disabilities](#) (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, University of Iowa website)

- Heather Widmayer and the SERCC editing team

proposal templates and includes exercises related to specific elements of a scientific proposal, particularly the Specific Aims page. During the workshop portion of this session, the group will critique participant writing samples.

Speaking for Success: Strategies for Effective Presentations

Wednesday, July 26, 11:00 am-12:00 pm

This course reviews how adults learn, as a way to examine effective delivery techniques to engage expert, peer, and lay audiences alike. This session provides practical information on how to deliver powerful oral presentations in the classroom, the conference room, the auditorium, and at regional or national meetings, as well as in workshops, over virtual platforms (such as Zoom), and during informal conversations with colleagues and potential collaborators. This session also includes a discussion of voice, inflection, body language, techniques to stimulate interest and involvement, and strategies to help facilitate audience recall of the message. In addition, it addresses how to prepare for a presentation, how to manage anxiety, and how to design and use visual aids effectively.

[Unsubscribe](#)

University of Iowa
Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine
Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core
451 Newton Rd.
130 Medicine Administration Building
Iowa City, IA 52242

COM-ScientificEditing@uiowa.edu
<https://medicine.uiowa.edu/sercc/>