

# Inclusive and Nonviolent Language for Everyday Use

## PURPOSE

This living document is intended to provide inclusive and nonviolent alternatives to commonly used words and phrases that can be harmful and create unintended consequences. Language isn't meant to alienate us; it's meant to help us understand one another.

## NOTE

Whether you are facilitating, writing an email, or having a conversation, creating an inclusive and thoughtful container is not just about saying the "right" word or phrase, but about continually developing our thoughts and actions through self-correction, supportive accountability, curiosity, and acknowledgement that we are all fumbling up the learning curve together. Sometimes a simple language change can change how we see ourselves, others, and the work we're doing. We recognize that a lot of this language is relevant only in the North American context, and embrace it as a starting point.

TRY...	INSTEAD OF...
Co-creators / Key Constituents / Partners / Frontline Communities / Impacted Communities / Interested parties / Involved parties	Stakeholders <i>(Has a colonial history/connotation)</i>
Key Audience	Target Audience
Approach / Intervention	Solution
Huddle / Meeting / Brainstorm	Powwow
Feed two birds with one scone / Accomplish two things at once / Even better	Kill two birds with one stone
Folks... / People / All / Y'all / Everyone / Colleagues / Children	Gendered language: hey guys / ladies and gentlemen / men / women / boys / girls
Artificial / Human-made	Man-made
Humanity / Humankind / Everybody / All people	Mankind
Human brilliance / People power	Manpower

Divide and accomplish / Divide and collaborate	Divide and conquer
Simple, cross-cultural language, clarify any unknown terms, acronyms, abbreviations	Jargon / idioms / acronyms or abbreviations
We're creating alongside / With / In partnership <i>(only use this language if it reflects reality)</i>	We're providing a solution for...
United States / US	America <i>(The Americas encompass many countries. Yet, when we talk about Americans in the United States, we're usually just referring to people from the United States and not acknowledging other countries.)</i>
General rule	Rule of thumb <i>(The rule of thumb has been said to derive from an English law that allowed a man to beat his wife with a stick as long as it was no thicker than his thumb.)</i>
Network / Team / Squad	Tribe
I haven't seen you in a long time / I can't do it	Long time no see / No can do <i>(Originally used to mock Native Americans or Chinese Pidgin English.)</i>
First pass/draft / Try	First shot / Shoot from the hip / Take a stab / give it a shot
Passing time	Killing time
Acted too quickly / Acted out of turn	Jumped the gun / too quick to pull the trigger
Make a decision / Take action	Pull the trigger
Acting hastily	Quick on the draw
Ready to go	Locked and loaded
Gather support	Rally the troops
Took a turn for the worse	Went south
Ask how to pronounce something	Not saying something because you don't know how to pronounce it

Block / Deny (verb) / No list (noun)	Blacklist
Trust / Allow (verb) / Allow list (noun)	Whitelist
Unclear / Confusing	Black box
Legacy / Exempt	Grandfathered in <i>(The grandfather clause originally described policies exempting illiterate white people from discriminatory Jim Crow voting laws.)</i>
Dynamic	Moving target
Take the lead / Keep things under control	Hold down the fort <i>(This phrase is rooted in racism and originated from settlers and soldiers building forts in and on indigenous lands to forcefully claim and colonize them.)</i>
Ace (verb) / Main, Primary, Source (noun)	Master <i>(In any form, it's connected to the idea of dominance and is a harmful term that comes with a history of oppression.)</i>
People with disabilities / People who experience disabilities ( <a href="#">People-first language</a> )	Disabled people <i>(This one can vary. Sometimes individuals will prefer people-first language and in other cases they may want to center a certain element of their identity ("autistic person," as an example), so asking for situation-specific preferences is the safest approach here.)</i>
Group / Rowdy crowd	Peanut gallery <i>(This phrase originally referred to the cheapest section of seats during the vaudeville era in the U.S. In the segregated South, seats in the back or upper balcony levels were mostly reserved for Black people.)</i>
Name the Indigenous peoples on whose land you sit <a href="#">Land Acknowledgement</a> ( <a href="#">map</a> )	Just saying where you're based in introductions
Behavior: Don't Assume. Just Ask! Repeat back or paraphrase what people say.	Behavior: forging ahead without checking assumptions

Listen and check for accuracy.	
Can / Might / Could	Should
Implement	Execute
Choose as the singular focus / Lock ourselves in to one option / Hang on to this	Die on that hill
Blank space / Open space	White space
Binary thinking	Black and white thinking
Take a defensive position / Huddle up	Circle the wagons
Calling people “in” ( <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/style/loretta-ross-smith-college-cancel-culture.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/style/loretta-ross-smith-college-cancel-culture.html</a> )	Call out culture, cancel culture
Mission control / Ground control	War room
Layperson	Layman
Agreements	Norms
Brave Space	Safe Space
Highly regarded/knowledgeable person / Expert (caution with “ <a href="#">expert worship</a> ”)	Guru ( <i>The word guru comes from Buddhist and Hindu religions and refers to a spiritual guide or leader who is held in high esteem. Throwing the term around casually is disrespectful.</i> )
Guide, Coach	Sherpa ( <i>Sherpa is an ethnic group and attributing the title to others is disrespectful.</i> )
Ace / Whiz / Rockstar	Ninja ( <i>Much like guru, people use the term to claim expertise in an area, such as legal ninja or writing ninja, and the concern is that the word’s origins aren’t being respected.</i> )
“I take this seriously” / Just don’t use the word Nazi.	Nazi ( <i>Using the term casually, as in “grammar Nazi” or “fun Nazi,” makes light of the horrible atrocities they committed.</i> )
Bamboozled (great word!)	Gyp/Gypped ( <i>It comes from the word Gypsy,</i>

	<i>who are Romani people, and using gyped to say you got ripped off perpetuates the negative stereotypes.)</i>
Intense response / impassioned / vehement	Hysterical ( <i>apparently okay when relating to something being funny, not okay if you're calling someone's actions hysterical because they're being emotional - irrational panic, often pegged to outspoken women</i> )
	"Magical" / "Logical" thinking
Lunch and Learn	<a href="#">Brown Bag</a>
Secret advantage	Secret weapon
Try, Test	Experiment
Guiding Star	North Star
<i>What else could we include?</i>	

This guide is informed in part by:

- ["Say This, Not That: A Guide to Inclusive Language"](#)
- ["Abolish Racist Language"](#)
- ["Offensive Words and Phrases To Stop Using And What To Say Instead"](#)
- [Other useful resources](#)
- NEEDS TO BE INTEGRATED (1/1/24):  
<https://ipcaknowledgebasket.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Balancing-the-Narrative-December-2023-DIGITAL.pdf>