

# AMA Manual of Style

You are looking at 1-6 of 6 items for: **med-9780195176339-div1-126**

## Inclusive Language

Roxanne K. Young

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Item type: section

Sexist language, racist language, theistic language all are typical of the policing languages of mastery, and cannot, do not, permit new knowl- edge or encourage the mutual exchange of ideas. Toni Morrison JAMA and the Archives Journals avoid the use of language that imparts bias against persons or groups on the basis of sex, race or ethnicity, age, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation. The careful writer avoids generalizations and stereotypes and is specific when choosing words to describe people. | Sex refers to the biological characteristics of males and females. Gender includes more than sex and serves as a

## Sex/Gender

Roxanne K. Young

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Sex refers to the biological characteristics of males and females. Gender includes more than sex and serves as a cultural indicator of a person's personal and social identity. An important consideration when referring to sex is the level of specificity required: specify sex when it is relevant. Choose sex-neutral terms that avoid bias, suit the material under discussion, and do not intrude on the reader's attention. See also , Age and Sex Referents. Note: Use man or men when referring to a specific man or group of men, woman or women when referring to a specific woman or a group

## Race/Ethnicity

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**UPDATE:** We will discontinue using quotation marks to identify parts of an article, but retain the capitalization; eg, This is discussed in the Methods section (not the "Methods")

section). This change was made February 14, 2013. Race is defined as “a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits.” Ethnicity relates to “groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background.” Like gender, race and ethnicity are cultural constructs, but they can have biological implications. Caution must be used when the race concept is described in health-related research. Some have argued

## Age

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Discrimination based on age (young or old) is ageism. Because the term elderly connotes a stereotype, avoid using it as a noun. When referring to the entire population of elderly persons, use of the elderly may be appropriate (as in the impact of prescription drug costs on the elderly, for example). Otherwise, terms such as older persons, older people, elderly patients, geriatric patients, older adults, older patients, aging adults, persons 65 years and older, or the older population are preferred. Note: In studies that involve human beings, age should always be given specifically. Researchers in geriatrics may use defined terms

## Disabilities

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According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/>), “a disability exists when an individual has any physical or psychological illness that ‘substantially limits’ a major life activity, such as walking, learning, breathing, working, or participating in community activities.” Avoid labeling (and thus equating) people with their disabilities or diseases (eg, the blind, schizophrenics, epileptics). Instead, put the person first. Avoid describing persons as victims or with other emotional terms that suggest helplessness (afflicted with, suffering from, stricken with, maimed). Avoid euphemistic descriptors such as physically challenged or special. Avoid metaphors that may be inappropriate and insensitive (blind to the truth,

## Sexual Orientation

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Sexual orientation should be indicated in a manuscript only when scientifically relevant. The term sexual preference should be avoided because it implies a voluntary choice of sexual orientation not supported by the scientific literature. In some contexts, reference to specific sexual behaviors (eg, men who have sex with men) may be more relevant than sexual orientation. The nouns lesbians and gay men are preferred to the broader term homosexuals when referring to specific groups of women and men, respectively. Avoid using gay or gays as a noun. Heterosexual and homosexual may be used as adjectives (eg, heterosexual men). A member