

Equitable and inclusive writing

Choose to use language that makes all of our alumni feel acknowledged and welcome.

Inclusive terms

Avoid terms and language that are sexist, agist, culturally insensitive, or biased in other ways. Substitute with more open terms.

~~freshman students~~

first-year students

~~young, talented minds~~

talented minds

~~chairman~~

chair

chairperson

~~hostess~~

host [for any gender]

~~actress~~

actor [for any gender]

When using cultural references and examples, feature diversity of all kinds as much as possible.

Alumni terms

Alumni: plural gender-inclusive

Alumnae: plural feminine

Alumnus: singular masculine

Alumna: singular feminine

"Alum" can be used for the gender-neutral singular for informal or internal settings. For gender-neutral singular cases in official university communications, adjust the sentence in question to avoid using "alumnus/alumna" or "alum."

Replace "You are a Cornell alum" with "You are a Cornell graduate" or "You are a Cornellian"

Replace "We'll choose one alumnus" with "We'll choose one Cornellian" or "We'll choose one of our alumni"

If someone has given a clear indication of their personal preference, use that when referring to them.

Personal pronouns

In most cases, use "he or she" for third-person, singular personal pronouns. If this proves cumbersome, turn your antecedent noun (i.e., what the pronoun is a substitute for) into the plural form and then subsequently use "they."

~~A student~~ Students can explore ~~his or her~~ their intellectual interests at Cornell. ~~He or she has~~ They have great flexibility in choosing majors and minors.

However, if the individual prefers it, "they" may be used to refer to that individual in the third person. This applies even to formal writing. Other gender-neutral personal pronouns (along with guidelines for their use) are listed in Cornell's LGBT Resource Center's [web page](#).

LGBT/LGBTQ

Both LGBT and LGBTQ are acceptable in all references for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning and/or queer.

LGBTQIA, LGBTQ+, and other variations are also acceptable, particularly in quotations, formal names of events or organizations, or if a subject prefers a certain variation. Consider explaining what each letter means in such cases.

When writing about a transgender person, always use their current public and preferred name. Do not refer to a previous name, sometimes called a *deadname*, unless relevant and with permission. Confirm and respect preferred pronouns (see above).

While Alumni Affairs and Development uses Chicago Style, AP Style offers more resources for writing about gender and sexuality at this time. For a deeper dive into equitable and inclusive writing, [browse their stylebook](#), accessible via Cornell Library.

Cultural and ethnic groups

Capitalize the names of cultural or ethnic groups, including but not limited to:

Asian

Black

Hispanic

Latino/a/x

European

Native American

Cayuga Nation

When referring to the cultural or ethnic group (particularly connected with the African Diaspora), capitalize "Black." Avoid capitalizing "white" in reference to race, as doing so risks associations with hate groups. Use the term "people of color" when necessary, in broad references to multiple races other than white. You may also use the abbreviation "BIPOC" (Black, Indigenous, people of color) in a direct quote. As with variations of LGBT, consider explaining what each letter means in such cases.

When discussing slavery, always use "enslaved people" instead of "slaves."

Omit hyphens for dual-heritage terms including "African American," "Asian American," etc.

Chicago Style considers "Latino" or "Latina" the preferred uses to refer to people of Latin American descent. You may use "Latinx" when preferred, as a gender-inclusive term.

"Native American" is appropriate when referring to people in the U.S. of different tribal affiliations. Be aware that some subjects prefer the term "American Indians." If someone has given a clear indication of their personal preference, respect that preference when referring to them. Use the specific names of tribes when possible. "First Nation" is the preferred term for Canadian native tribes. Capitalize "Indigenous" when used to refer to the original inhabitants of a specific place.

While Alumni Affairs and Development uses Chicago Style, AP Style offers more resources for writing about specific ethnic and cultural groups at this time. For a deeper dive into equitable and inclusive writing, [browse their stylebook](#), accessible via Cornell Library.

Disabilities

If it is pertinent to your writing to include information about a person with a disability, respect how the individual wishes to be described. Some people prefer "disabled person" or "disabled." Others prefer "person with a disability." When writing about a group, use "people with disabilities."

While Alumni Affairs and Development uses Chicago Style, AP Style offers more resources for writing about people with disabilities at this time. For a deeper dive into equitable and inclusive writing, [browse their stylebook](#), accessible via Cornell Library.

Consult with your stakeholders, decide wisely, and be consistent within your piece.