

## Referring to Different Groups of People

When making reference to people as a group, you should avoid terms that may be considered offensive by members of that group. Apparently innocent words may have been used in a pejorative or derogatory manner in the past, and so other terms are preferred. Study the terms to avoid and the preferred terms for referring to each group listed.

Terms to Avoid	Preferred Terms
<b>When referring to <i>Women</i></b>	
Girls, ladies, gals, females, the fair sex	Women
<b>When referring to <i>Black people</i></b>	
Minorities, Negroes, colored, Afro-Americans (African-Americans is preferred)	African-Americans, Caribbean-Americans, black people, people of color
<b>When referring to <i>Asian people</i></b>	
Asians, minorities, use of a specific nationality to refer to a group of people from multiple Asian countries (e.g.: saying "Koreans" to refer to a group of Korean, Chinese, Japanese)	Asian-Americans (if American-born or U.S. residents or citizens); use of specific nationalities if group members are foreign nationals from the same country (Japanese, Koreans, Pakistanis, etc.); people of color
<b>When referring to <i>Pacific Islanders</i></b>	
Asians, minorities, use of a specific nationality to refer to a group of people from different islands/countries (e.g.: saying "Hawaiians" to refer to a group of Polynesians from different islands/countries)	Pacific Islanders, Polynesians, use of a specific island name or nationality if group members are foreign nationals from the same island/country (Cook Islanders, Maoris, Samoans, Hawaiians, etc.), people of color
<b>When referring to <i>American Indians</i></b>	
Minorities, redskins, Indians, natives, Eskimos, aborigines (Australian usage)	American Indians, Native Americans, use of specific tribal names (e.g.: Cherokee, Crow, Apache, Dakota, Sioux), native inhabitants, native peoples, people of color
<b>When referring to <i>People of Hispano-Latin American Origin</i></b>	
Minorities, Spanish-surnamed, Spanish (unless you are talking about people from the country of Spain), Latins	Latinas/Latinos, Chicanas/Chicanos, use of specific nationality if group members are foreign nationals from the same country/area (Cubans/Cubanos, Puerto Ricans, Colombians), people of color, Hispanics
<b>When referring to <i>Gay Men and Lesbians</i></b>	
Homosexuals	Gay men, lesbians

Terms to Avoid	Preferred Terms
<b>When referring to <i>Older Adults</i></b>	
Geriatrics, old people, elderly, the aged	Older adults, senior citizens, seniors, older people
<b>When referring to <i>Younger Adults</i></b>	
Kids, yuppies, Gen-Xers	Younger people, young adults
<b>When referring to <i>Differently Abled People</i></b>	
Handicapped, crippled, wheelchair-bound, deaf and dumb, the disabled	Differently abled, developmentally disabled, physically disabled, physically challenged
<b>When referring to <i>White People</i></b>	
Anglos, WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant)	European-Americans, use of specific nationality if group members are foreign nationals from the same country/area (e.g.: Swedish-Americans, Polish-Americans), white people

Think of other terms that you may have heard for groups of people, and consider whether you should avoid or use those terms.

For further reading:

- *Sensitive Language: Avoiding Insensitive and Offensive Language*, by Random House, [http://www.randomhouse.com/words/language/avoid\\_guide.html](http://www.randomhouse.com/words/language/avoid_guide.html)
- *Sensitive Language: The Offensiveness Quotient*, by Random House, [http://www.randomhouse.com/words/language/oq\\_chart.html](http://www.randomhouse.com/words/language/oq_chart.html)
- *Talking about People: A Guide to Fair and Accurate Language*, by Rosalie Maggio, Oryx, 1997
- *Guidelines for Bias-Free Writing*, by Marilyn Schwartz, Indiana University Press, 1995
- *The Bias-Free Word Finder: A Dictionary of Nondiscriminatory Language*, by Rosalie Maggio, Beacon, 1992