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UNIFORM LAW CONFERENCE OF CANADA

CONFÉRENCE POUR L'HARMONISATION DES LOIS AU CANADA

ULCC Guide

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

ULCC Statement of Policy on Diversity and Inclusion

The ULCC Statement of Policy on Diversity and Inclusion commits the ULCC to "…cultivating an inclusive, respectful and welcoming environment…" and recognizes that "…diversity supports creativity and innovation, which are essential to the successful fulfillment of [the ULCC's] law reform mandate and leads to products that are responsive to everyone."

This guide document sets out best practices in relation to the implementation of this Statement of Policy, and directs that, where possible, inclusive language should be used in relation to all work of the ULCC. This includes working group reports and draft legislation, and all types of communications – oral or written, formal or informal, addressed to an internal or external audience. Particular attention should be paid when documents are being translated to ensure that, wherever possible, inclusive language is reflected in both English and French versions of ULCC work products.

Purpose of Inclusive Language

The use of inclusive language in written and oral communications is designed to:

- Promote inclusion and recognition of, and respect for, diversity; and
- Eliminate forms of discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, age or any other identity factor.

Principles of Inclusive Language

Five general principles should guide the use of inclusive language[1]:

1) Use what works best – apply the technique or techniques that fit the specific situation, taking into account the type of communication and the intended audience;
2) Respect people's wishes – when writing to or about someone, use the person's specified courtesy title and preferred pronouns;
3) Make choices that are respectful of diversity – choose words, expressions and examples that are in keeping with diversity in order to avoid stereotypes;
4) Write clearly and effectively – use the principles of inclusive writing in conjunction with the principles of clear and effective communication; and
5) Be consistent – apply inclusive language techniques consistently through all communications.

Examples of practical techniques that can be used to ensure the use of inclusive language are set out in Appendix A – Government of Canada Quick Reference Sheet: Inclusive Writing Guidelines and Resources (June 2026).

[1] Principles of inclusive writing - https://www.noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/writing-tips-plus/inclusive-writing-background-principles

Appendix A

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET: Inclusive writing guidelines and resources

This quick reference sheet summarizes the main principles of inclusive writing and gives examples of practical techniques you can apply. It also contains a list of resources designed to help you write inclusively. For the full list of articles, visit the page Inclusive writing – Guidelines and resources.

PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE WRITING

Our guidelines for inclusive writing are based on five main principles.

1. Apply the technique or techniques that fit your specific situation, taking into account the type of text you're writing and the audience you're writing for
2. When you're writing to or about someone, use the person's specified courtesy title and pronouns
3. Choose words, expressions and examples that are in keeping with diversity so as to avoid stereotypes
4. Use the principles of inclusive writing in conjunction with the principles of clear and effective communication
5. Apply inclusive writing techniques throughout each text and throughout all communications within your organization

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GENDER-INCLUSIVE WRITING TECHNIQUES

Use the techniques outlined below to write gender-inclusively.

Use gender-inclusive nouns

Technique	Examples
Replace gendered occupational titles	• An **ombuds** (not “ombudsman”) must deal objectively with all requests. • Cleaning **staff** (not “cleaning ladies”) begin work at 6 p.m. • Every **server** (not “waiter” or “waitress”) must wear a uniform.
Replace expressions containing “man” or “woman”	• They fought for the rights of the **average person** (not “the common man”).
Replace gendered terms denoting relationships (in general contexts or in cases where gender is unknown)	• Members may bring **spouses** or **partners** (not “wives or girlfriends”) to the event. • The child was picked up by a **sibling** (not “brother” or “sister”).

Replace or omit a gendered pronoun

Technique	Examples
Pluralize the noun	• **Nurses** must carefully record **their** patients’ symptoms (not “A nurse … her patients’ symptoms”).
Use the singular “they”	• Generic singular “they”: If an employee is injured at work, **they** have a duty to inform **their** direct supervisor (not “he or she has a duty to inform his or her supervisor”). • Specific singular “they” (used by some persons outside the gender binary): Morgan submitted **their** report.
Use an article	• Each person attending must show **a** ticket (not “his or her ticket”) upon entry. • A student must complete all **the** required courses (not “his required courses”) by year end.
Omit the pronoun	• No child may participate without parental permission (not “his or her parents’ permission”).
Repeat the noun	• If a first-time user wants to view content on the site, **the user** (not “he”) must create an account.
Address the reader directly	• **You** must provide **your** complete contact information (not “The applicant must provide his or her …”).
Use the imperative	• Ensure that **your** leave balances are correct (not “Each employee must ensure that his leave balances …”).
Use the pronoun “who”	• A property owner **who** disagrees with the assessment can file an appeal (not “If a property owner disagrees, he …”).

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Replace or omit a gendered pronoun (continued)

Technique	Examples
Use the pronoun "one"	• Numerical "one": A tenant in Vancouver will probably pay higher rents than **one** in St. John's (not "than she would in St. John's"). • Impersonal "one": Under the Canadian Charter, **one** has the right to act in accordance with **one's** conscience (not "a citizen … his conscience").
Use the passive voice	• Dependent clause: A server has the right to keep any tips (that are) **received** from patrons (not "tips that she receives"). • Main clause: When the repair person cannot obtain a discontinued part, a generic part **will be substituted** if possible (not "he will substitute a generic part").
Use sentence fragments	• The successful administrative assistant will have the following qualities: - **attention to detail** (not "she will be detail-oriented") - **excellent interpersonal skills** (not "she will have excellent interpersonal skills")
Rewrite the sentence	• The motorist should signal before a lane change and then check to ensure the lane is clear (not "and then he should check"). • After **finding** the ideal property, a home buyer should arrange for a home inspection (not "When he finds the ideal property"). • Medical help is on site in case a participant **suffers an injury** (not "injures himself") during the event.

Make correspondence gender-inclusive

Parts of the letter or email	Examples
Inside address (if receiver's gender or courtesy title is unknown)	• Robin Maxwell • R. T. Maxwell
Salutation (if receiver's gender or courtesy title is unknown)	• Robin Maxwell • R. T. Maxwell • Dear Robin Maxwell: • Dear R. T. Maxwell: • Dear Parts Manager: (example of a job title for a receiver whose name is unknown) • Dear Homeowner: (example of a gender-inclusive noun for a form letter) • Hello, (in an email)

Tailor your message

Context	Examples
Tailoring to recipients who are non-binary	Use the person's specified courtesy title if you know it; for example: • Dear Mx. Baldwin:

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REPRESENTATION OF NON-BINARY GENDER

Members of gender-diverse communities have put forward various techniques for writing English texts that correspond to their realities. Since individual usage varies, it's important to respect each person's wishes with regard to pronouns and courtesy titles.

Writing to or about non-binary individuals

Issue	Recommendations
Pronouns and neopronouns	When writing about a non-binary individual, use the person's specified pronoun: • singular "they" • a neopronoun (for example, "ze/hir") • "he" or "she"
Gender-inclusive courtesy titles	When writing to or about a non-binary individual, • use the person's specified courtesy title if you know it (for example, "Mx.") • if in doubt, omit the courtesy title, and use the person's first name or initials with the last name: - Cameron Clarkson - C. R. Clarkson
Gender-inclusive nouns	When writing about a non-binary person, use terms that are gender-inclusive: • "parental leave" (not "maternity leave") • "police officer" (not "policeman" or "policewoman") • "sibling" (not "brother" or "sister") • "spouse" (not "husband" or "wife")

Translating text about non-binary individuals

Issue	Recommendations and examples
Translating the French pronoun "iel"	When translating the pronoun "iel," • try to find out what pronoun the person uses in English. • if you can't find out the person's pronoun, use the singular "they" and its forms: French: **Iel** a lancé **sa** ligne de vêtements en 2000. English: **They** launched **their** clothing line in 2000. **Note:** A person who uses the gender-inclusive pronoun "iel" in French may use any of a variety of pronouns in English, including neopronouns. Thus, it's important not to assume that "iel" is always best translated by the singular "they."
Translating other gender-inclusive text	When translating a text about a non-binary individual whose gender is unclear, • use the singular "they" • use the other gender-inclusive techniques listed above

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RESOURCES FOR INCLUSIVE AND RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE

The resources below will help you find the right words to write inclusively and respectfully.

Inclusionary: A collection of gender-inclusive solutions

Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology

Accessibility Glossary

Gender and Sexual Diversity Glossary

An HTML version of the quick reference sheet is available on the **Language Portal of Canada**.

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