Avoid deficit-based language

Avoid dehumanizing language that leads with deficits. Use language that looks at root causes and describes the barriers that impede those seeking opportunity.

Example

✔️ Use: Consider donating to help students from lower socioeconomic groups participate in science research.

❌ Avoid: to ensure these impoverished students receive the help they desperately need.

Show variety within socioeconomic status groups

Avoid language that treats socioeconomic status groups as homogeneous or that treats higher socioeconomic status groups as the norm.

Example

✔️ Use: Buying a car is a privilege enjoyed by some teens in the US.

❌ Avoid: an important coming-of-age ritual for every teen

How to refer to occupation

Avoid representing some types of employment as being inherently better than others, and avoid describing jobs or workers as “unskilled” or “low skill.” Use specific descriptions instead of “blue collar” and “white collar.”

Avoid outdated and generalizing terms for countries

Avoid using broad, vague terms that signal entire parts of the globe as “other,” such as “developed” and “developing” nations and “first world” and “third world” countries. When discussing groups of countries, identify them by name or specific geographic regions.

Example

✔️ Use: low-income countries in East Asia

❌ Avoid: the Global South

Like what you’ve read? See the full guide from the American Chemical Society.

www.acs.org/inclusivityguide