

Language Guide for Presentations



First Edition

i. Introduction

Thank you for presenting for the AHG. The AHG Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee has created this guide to help us use inclusive language and avoid potentially harmful language. Why is inclusive language important? Inclusive language helps us effectively communicate information we want to share with others without being misinterpreted in our intentions. We hope this guide serves as a useful tool for presenters in designing their presentations to be accessible and positively received by their audience. The goal is not to get bogged down in the intricacies of language – we made this guide so presenters could connect with their audience about herbalism without being misunderstood. We appreciate your continued support of the AHG as well as your contribution to herbalism and wish you a great presentation!

ii. Committee Statement

We support herbalism medicine by/for/of the people, for every person no matter how they identify. Our mission is to guide new learners and seasoned practitioners into the latest frontiers of plant therapeutics and as well as ensure that all communities are being and feeling seen.

General Presentation Guide

i. Use of Disclosures and Disclaimers

Nowadays, it's expected to be transparent about potential conflicts of interest, opinions, sensitive topics, and problematic terminology. What is a disclosure? A disclosure is a statement or notice that alerts your audience to relevant information, especially when it comes to possible bias influenced by affiliations. Providing a disclosure helps your audience digest the content of your presentation without leading to heated emotions. It also establishes trust between the presenter and audience as well as boosts your credibility/professionalism. You may choose to discuss any perceived/foreseen potential conflicts of interest (affiliations, sponsors), disclose details about your background to underline the authenticity of your presentation, or simply share that you're self-aware of the limits of your presentation content.

What is a disclaimer?

A disclaimer limits liability for the content owner. Suppose you accidentally communicated inaccurate or misleading information that led someone to a negative outcome (or maybe they misheard what you said) – an informational accuracy disclaimer is critical to protect you from anyone who might seek damages from you.

Disclosures and disclaimers should be included at the beginning of presentations. We recommend this be included on a slide at the start or after your initial introduction as you transition into the presentation.

Idea: Practitioners may already have some experience with disclosures and/or disclaimers in their client-based interactions. Verbiage developed for a presentation could be added to an herbal practice.

ii. Problematic Words and Phrases

As the world comes together and becomes more interconnected, our future promises to be diverse. AHG community members come from different cultures, races and ethnicities, genders, political and religious beliefs, physical and learning differences, ages, job occupations, sexual orientations and identities. Our uniqueness assures our strength and continuing excellence as an herbal community.

We've outlined a (non-exhaustive) list regarding problematic words and phrases to avoid in presentations. Some readers may find it not immediately intuitive why certain words and phrases are considered offensive; that's why we've also included the reasoning and suggestions on alternatives/replacements.

Are there general principles of inclusive language dos and don'ts?

Use gender-neutral terms; avoid ableist language; focus on people not disabilities or circumstances; avoid generalizations about people, regions, cultures and countries; and avoid slang/slurs/stereotypes, idioms, metaphors and other words with layers of meaning and negative history.

The problematic words and phrases are grouped into two categories: one for terminology that's more herbalism-specific, and the second for a more general list of problematic words.

To be clear, this is not meant to be a list of banned words. Nor do we want to control/dictate your wording.

The **“Language Guide for Presentations”** is offered as a reference resource for presenters who are preparing their lectures, webinars, or workshops.

We hope your work shines on presentation day in-person and is positively received online too!

Herbalism-specific words and phrases:

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
<p>grandfather clause/ grandfather policy/ grandfather right grandfathered (in) grandfathering</p>	<p>legacy legacy status exempt</p>	<p>Definition: A “grandfather” clause/policy or “grandfathering” is a provision in which an old rule continues to apply to some existing situations while a new rule will apply to all future cases. Those exempt from the new rule are said to have “grandfather” rights, acquired rights, or to have been “grandfathered” in.</p> <p>Why it’s problematic: According to the Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs, “grandfather clause” originated in the American South in the 1890s as a way to deny the 15th Amendment and prevent Black Americans suffrage.</p>
<p>master master/student (relationship) master/apprentice (relationship) master list</p>	<p>leader teacher teacher/student teacher/apprentice mentor/student mentor/apprentice comprehensive list</p>	<p>Definition: The term “master” refers to someone who is in charge of a person/group or is at the controlling head of a system/process. It also can denote mastery/high level of skill or accomplishment in a subject.</p> <p>Why it’s problematic: When is the word “master” problematic? It’s important to consider the context in which it’s used (particularly if that use is derived from a racist “master-slave” binary). IT Connect at the University of Washington traces the archaic “master-slave” metaphor to at least 1904 (describing a sidereal clock system at an observatory in Cape Town): Dr. Ron Eglash, a scholar in the field of African and Native American cybernetics and a professor at the University of Michigan, argued in his 2007 essay that the words may have been chosen to emphasize the concept “[a] free master that did no work and a slave that followed the master’s orders made for a vivid, if ethically suspect, technosocial metaphor.”</p> <p>Appropriate usage: “Nona Gaprindashvili is a master at the game of chess.”</p> <p>When to replace: When “master” evokes a hierarchical or power dynamic, consider an alternate wording.</p>

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
<p>Herbals with colloquial names such as:</p> <p>“Indian paintbrush” “Wandering Jew” “Kaffir lime leaves” “Hindu rope” “Mexican hat”</p>	<p>Castilleja Zebrina Makrut lime leaves Hoya Ratibida columnifera</p>	<p>Comment: Using the casual/colloquial names of plants can unnecessarily detract from your presentation.</p> <p>It can also alienate audience members. This goes back to the general advice of avoiding colloquialisms.</p> <p>Botany/herbalism has many culturally insensitive names. Each plant has many names, so it’s easy to swap the offensive one out.</p>
<p>maternity care/health maternal care/health</p> <p>When discussing uterine health:</p> <p>women’s health female health</p> <p>When discussing prostate health:</p> <p>men’s health male health</p>	<p>perinatal care/health</p> <p>uterine health person/people/anyone with a uterus</p> <p>prostate health person/people/anyone with a prostate</p>	<p>Comment: When presenting useful information to gender diverse people, we advocate to lean toward sensitivity.</p> <p>We want to help you create a warm, welcoming environment.</p> <p>Provincial Health Services Authority (British Columbia, Canada) provides a reference on gender inclusive language in a professional setting here.</p>

Other problematic words and phrases:

This second category covers a more general list of problematic words. Notice we've grouped them into four subcategories:

- Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, Religion, Native/Indigenous Identity
- Disability, Ableism, Physical and Mental Attributes
- Gender and sexual orientation
- Immigration Status and Language Proficiency

Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, Religion, Native/Indigenous Identity, Immigration Status and Language Proficiency-specific words and phrases:

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
tribal knowledge	institutional knowledge organizational knowledge	<p>Definition: Colloquially, a “tribe” can refer to the collective of people who work together, think similarly, or share the same values. Use of “tribe” or “tribal knowledge” in this way is offensive to many American Indian and Alaska Native and world indigenous peoples.</p> <p>Why it’s problematic: In a Western context, the word “tribal” implies/perpetuates negative racial stereotypes.</p> <p>Reserve the use of “tribal” to apply specifically to, for example, acknowledgement of the “Coast Salish peoples of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations.”</p>

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
lower the bar	simplify inclusive make more accessible	<p>Definition: This phrase is based on the erroneous idea that an organization has to relax standards in order to include people from different racial, ethnic, gender backgrounds.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: In fact, in many cases it's the opposite; organizations that have poorly designed hiring practices fail to adequately evaluate/recruit/attract highly qualified, and often diverse, people.</p>
long time, no see no can do	It's been a while! Sorry, I can't	<p>Comment: These terms as well as other expressions using "broken" English originate from stereotypes making fun of nonnative English speakers, particularly applied to Indigenous people and Asians.</p>
mantra	mission statement motto	<p>Comment: The term mantra is a Sanskrit word that indicates a sacred sound or utterance repeated during religious practice of meditation.</p> <p>This term is deeply rooted in Hinduism and Buddhism but has become associated with the practice of affirmations or other unrelated practices that do not capture the original spiritual meaning.</p>

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
<p>minority (if used to comment on a specific group of people and how the group would like to be referred to isn't considered)</p>	<p>people of color traditionally underserved community historically excluded</p>	<p>Comment: The term minority can be considered to be pejorative. It's preferable to use BIPOC or People of Color instead.</p>
<p>African American as an umbrella term for people of African ancestry worldwide</p>	<p>Black people</p>	<p>Comment: African American and Black are not always interchangeable.</p> <p>Using African American as an umbrella term erases the different ethnicities, nationalities, and diasporas of Black people around the world. You can use Black (capitalized).</p>
<p>Indian to refer to someone who's not from India</p>	<p>Indigenous Native American</p>	<p>Definition: The term "Indian" is used only when referring to people from India, not for Indigenous people.</p> <p>Context: Indigenous/Native American is preferred unless the individual unless the specific nation/tribe is known or the person/group specifies otherwise.</p> <p>Occasionally some prefer American Indian; however, this is not universal.</p>
<p>Oriental</p>	<p>Asian Asian American AAPI API</p>	<p>Comment: "Oriental" is considered an outdated, offensive term.</p>

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
<p>native speaker non-native speaker (if used to imply a speaker of English who lives in the U.S. or a person who learned English and lives in the U.S., then these words are problematic)</p>	<p>English as a primary language English as first language English language learners English as a secondary language (ESL)</p>	<p>Definition: A person who has or hasn't spoken the language in question from early childhood.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: Over time, as officials have recognized that some of these labels can perpetuate negative or inaccurate narratives.</p> <p>English is not the native or official language of the United States. The U.S. Department of Education talks about English language learners (ELL) or just English learners (EL). The Center for Promise uses students whose first language is not English (FLNE).</p>
<p>guru shaman/shamanic sherpa</p>	<p>expert specialist teacher</p>	<p>Definition: A person who excels in a particular skill or activity. For example, a "sherpa" is a person with Tibetan heritage who lives in the Nepalese Himalayas.</p> <p>The ethnic group is well-known because there are so many Sherpas that have served as porters on mountain-climbing expeditions. The word "shaman" is originally from Tungusic šamán ("man of knowledge").</p> <p>Why it's problematic: These words are culturally appropriative and thus are problematic.</p>
<p>peanut gallery</p>	<p>observers</p>	<p>Definition: The upper levels of a balcony, gallery, theater and often the least expensive.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: Peanut gallery originally referred to the balconies of segregated theaters, where African Americans had to sit. Peanuts were introduced to America during the Transatlantic slave trade.</p>

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
pow wow	<p>standup discussion meeting meetup</p>	<p>Definition: A North American Indigenous cultural/spiritual tradition that connects community members with healing and their heritage.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: Using the word "pow wow" is cultural misappropriation, and ultimately racist.</p>
jerry rig	<p>design handmake</p>	<p>Definition: "Jerry-rigged" means organized or constructed in a crude or improvised manner.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: "Jerry" is a derogatory term used by soldiers and civilians of the Allied nations for Germans in WWII.</p>
spirit animal	<p>kindred spirit personal icon role model</p>	<p>Definition: Spirit animals are an important part of the belief system of some cultures and refer to a spirit that "helps guide or protect a person on a journey and whose characteristics that person shares or embodies."</p> <p>Why it's problematic: Casually referring to something as your spirit animal is cultural appropriation.</p>
totem pole	<p>hierarchy</p>	<p>Definition: A totem pole or is a tall structure created by Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples (Haida, Nuxalt, Kwakwaka'wakw, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Coast Salish) that tells a nation's/family's lineage and displays their rights/protections in their home.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: Using "totem pole" in reference to hierarchy is culturally appropriative.</p>

Disability, Ableism, Physical and Mental Attributes:

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
<p>blind to the truth blind spot blind eye to</p>	<p>choosing to ignore lack of awareness ignorance</p>	<p>Definition: Several colloquialisms use the word “blind” in a negative manner (to describe a lack of awareness).</p> <p>Why it’s problematic: This phrase is ableist, equating “blind” with ignorance.</p>
<p>crazy insane</p>	<p>confusing amazing senseless</p>	<p>Comment: “Crazy” is a word with many uses and connotations. Historically, “crazy” was commonly used to describe someone who may be neurodiverse or have a mental health disability.</p> <p>Attributing a negative quality to mental health perpetuates negative stereotypes.</p>
<p>dumb</p>	<p>uninformed</p>	<p>Comment: It’s a negative word often associated negatively with those who cannot speak.</p>
<p>sanity check</p>	<p>confidence check</p>	<p>Comment: The phrase sanity check unnecessarily references mental health.</p>
<p>“deaf” to something fall on deaf ears</p>	<p>unwilling to hear or listen unwilling to learn/understand misunderstanding didn’t listen ignored disregarded</p>	<p>Comment: This phrase connotes being deaf as a choice or being stubborn/unwilling to listen.</p>

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
<p>fat obese</p>	<p>body weight higher weight larger body</p>	<p>Comment: People of higher weight experience discrimination and stigma. While there are individuals who reclaim and self-identify with the term “fat,” do not assume this is universally the case.</p> <p>The recommendation is to avoid using potentially hurtful words.</p>
<p>suffering from autism</p>	<p>autistic people people on the autism spectrum neurodiversity</p>	<p>Comment: Research shows that there isn’t a single way which is accepted by everyone. However, “autistic” and “on the autism spectrum” were the preferred terms among most autistic adults and families. “People with autism” is still used quite a lot, but more and more people do not like it. Phrases and words like “suffering from autism” often cause strong negative reactions from autistic people and families. Many feel this devalues who they are or says that there is something wrong with them.</p> <p>Regarding talking about autism as a condition or disability, these types of verbiage are also widely used, including by autism charities, but some autistic people don’t like them.</p>
<p>handicapped differently/other abled people of all abilities special handicapped parking</p>	<p>person with disability persons with disabilities people with disabilities (only in Easy Read documents, informal text and oral speech) accessible parking</p>	<p>Comment: Disability is part of life and humankind’s diversity. Therefore we should try to avoid labels, dramatizations, stereotypes, and invisibilizing people with disabilities. “Handicapped” has fallen out of favor because it is deficit-centric rather than people-first (People with disabilities are not deficient. Nor are they superheroes, necessarily exceptionally gifted, an inspiration to all humanity, etc.). According to UN Geneva “Disability Inclusive Language Guidelines,” using softening terms (“differently/other abled,” “special”) or other condescending euphemisms stigmatize differences and deny the reality of people’s experiences/existence.</p>

Gender and sexual orientation:

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
<p>he/she as an inclusive combined subject pronoun, also: s/he he or she he and she his and her his or her</p>	<p>they/them/ theirs as singular (neutral)</p>	<p>Definition: In the past, when referring to others, the binary pronoun (he/she) and possessive pronoun (his/her) was often used.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: Using the binary pronoun and possessive pronoun is no longer considered accurate due to greater understanding and acceptance that gender and sexual orientation are not binary or limited to male and female or he/she and his/her.</p>
<p>preferred pronouns</p>	<p>pronouns personal pronouns</p>	<p>Definition: Pronouns that individuals use to substitute for themselves in the third-person and how they prefer to be referred to. Examples include: he/his/him, she/her/hers, they/their/theirs, ze/hir/hirs and ze/zir/zirs.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: "Preferred" implies that a person's pronoun is optional, and it suggests that gender identity and expression is a preference and that respectful pronoun use is therefore optional/a choice.</p>
<p>guys ladies/gals</p>	<p>folks people you all guests friends</p>	<p>Comment: For presenting to a diverse audience, avoid gendered pronouns that favor one gender over the other and aim for those that are inclusive.</p>

Problem words	Suggested Alternative(s)	Context
mankind	humankind	<p>Definition: The human race; humankind.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: Using “man”kind to represent all of humankind is sexist.</p>
sexual preference lifestyle	sexual orientation	<p>Definition: Romantic or sexual attraction (or a combination) to persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, to both sexes or more than one gender.</p> <p>Why it's problematic: The terms “sexual preference” and “lifestyle” are considered offensive because they imply that a person’s sexuality is a choice.</p>
gay, as a generic term	LGBTQIA+ LGBTQQIAAP	<p>Comment: Gay is not a generic term for everyone who is not cisgender heterosexual.</p> <p>Some LGBTQIA+ folks identify as queer, some as gay, some as genderfluid and not male OR female, etc.</p> <p>Keeping language gender-neutral and avoiding gendering body organs can help keep your language inclusive.</p>

How to Address Your Audience:

AVOID

CONSIDER INSTEAD

Yes, Sir? Yes, Ma'am?

Yes?

She just said...

They just said...

Preferred Pronouns

Personal Pronouns

Mankind, Chairman,

Humankind, chairperson,

Policeman

police officer

Ladies and gentlemen...

Colleagues, esteemed guests...

Thank you, sir.

Thank you.

Greetings, guys and gals

Greetings, everyone

Accessibility

Accessibility is at the forefront of our mission. Between 30-40% of people are neurodiverse, experience color blindness/low vision, or have learning disabilities. The way you design slides can improve how positively your content is received. We'll outline some key design principles:

Fonts:

Fonts are not just about readability by screen readers or google translate, but also about visibility and contrast. Good fonts? Sans-serif styles (they don't have the decorative stems), e.g., Arial, Verdana, Open Sans, Helvetica Neue.

Space:

Do not put too much on a slide or page, use spaces and use a large enough font. This helps audiences reading using mobile devices and users with low vision, etc.

Contrast/Colors:

The 7 types of colorblindness are protanopia (red-blind), protanomaly (incompletely red-blind), deuteranopia (green-blind), deuteranomaly (incompletely green-blind), tritanopia (blue-blind), tritanomaly (incompletely blue-blind), and chromatopsia (completely colorblind).

Colorblind Awareness estimates 5% of the population experiences colorblindness. That's around 16.5 million Americans! Focus on high contrast font-background combinations to avoid complications. There are many readers with low vision, who have dyslexia, are neurodiverse, etc.

If you're going to add visualizations, great! Dr. David Nichols (a mathematics PhD) offers a great color blindness simulation usability/accessibility [testing tool](#).

Closed Captioning:

People who are deaf or hard of hearing need captioning, as might neurodiverse people/folks with different learning styles.

Here are a few ideas you find may help folks process your presentation:

- Slides, not just speaking: Visual cues and slides can help
- Face camera, have direct line to face in camera (not from below, etc.)
- Live transcription for closed captioning (Zoom now offers the capability to turn on live transcription, even on free accounts.)

What if I mess up?

We are making this guide to help support a healthy and safe community for all. Inclusive language is about kindness, sharing, and mutual respect.

It is not about fear of offending someone or policing/banning words. We understand this is a learning process and not something we will be perfect at.

Ultimately, the hope is to become better herbalists, educators, practitioners, and presenters together. If you make a mistake, it's okay. Apologize, correct yourself, and move on with the intention to do better. We all are learning as we go, and the best we can do is to try our best. Thank you!

Support:

We are eager to review your slides, hear your ideas or concerns, and offer you feedback/suggestions to help guide you (not to police/control but facilitate in a positive, safe environment).

This Language Guide was compiled by AHG's DEI Committee and reviewed by the Board of Directors:

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We welcome feedback and submitting resources for the resources area. If you wish to have us add more examples in future editions, don't hesitate to let us know!

Reach out!

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