OUT & EQUAL

THE BUSINESS OF BELONGING™

Summit Language Guide: Best Practices

The following guide provides presenters current best practices for language and identity. By aligning on up-to-date language practices, we can create a supportive environment.

Identity labels should never restrict or confine individuals; they serve as helpful tools for describing experiences and finding community. When engaging in direct conversation, it is important to respect and honor individuals' preferred identity labels.

Identity Term	Definition
LGBTQ+	An acronym used to refer to all non-straight/non-cisgender individuals. We recommend using the (+) to ensure inclusion of all identities. Stands for: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual+, Transgender, Queer, and all expansive identities and experiences. Those outside of the US may use "LGBTI(+)" instead, to represent the intersex community.
Asexual Ace	Someone who does not experience sexual attraction to others or lacks a desire for sex and or sexual partners. Asexuality exists on a spectrum.
Aromantic Aro	Someone who does not experience romantic attraction. Aromanticism exists on a spectrum.
Bisexual+ Bi+	Someone who experiences attraction towards more than one gender, though not necessarily at the same time or the same way. We recommend the (+) to include the expansive experiences of identity terms under the Bisexual umbrella.
Lesbian	Usually, a woman whose primary attraction is toward people of the same gender. Some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians, often because they have some connection to womanhood and are primarily attracted to women.
Gay	Synonymous with same-gender attraction. Primarily defines men who are attracted to other men. Many others who experience same-gender attraction also identify as gay.
Queer	Queer describes those who do not fit within traditional straight and/or cisgender roles, norms, or assumptions. Queer can mean any or all the following: • A non-straight identity. • A non-monosexual identity. • A nonbinary, gender queer, or gender expansive identity. • A political ethos or practice.
Transgender Trans	Someone whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender can be both a specific identity label, as well as an umbrella term.

Nonbinary	A gender identity which falls outside of the gender binary, meaning an individual does not identify as strictly female or male. Not all nonbinary people identify as transgender. When referring to all non-cisgender individuals we recommend saying "trans and nonbinary."
Cisgender	Someone whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.
Intersex	An umbrella term and identity for people who have differences in sex traits or reproductive anatomy. Intersex people can have any gender identity and sexual orientation.
Two Spirit	"Two Spirit" is an umbrella term, coined in 1990 during the third annual inter-tribal Native American/First Nations gay/lesbian American conference, to describe Indigenous North Americans who fulfill one of many mixed gender roles found traditionally among many Native Americans and Canadian First Nations Indigenous groups.

Avoid:

Using identity terms as a noun or verb.

Non-Inclusive	Inclusive
She is **a transgender**.	She is a transgender woman. OR: She is transgender.
He is **an** LGBTQ+.	He identifies as LGBTQ+.
They are transgender**ed**.	They are a transgender person. OR They are transgender. Transgender is an adjective, not a verb, an adverb, or a noun, so there needs to always be that proper noun included in the sentence.
LGBTQ+ **are a** diverse community.	The LGBTQ+ community is diverse.

Outdated Terms / Gendered Language

While some LGBTQ+ people may use these terms to describe their own experience, we recommend avoiding the following terms when referring to our communities.

Non-Inclusive	Inclusive
Transsexual	Transgender or "trans"
Preferred pronouns	Pronouns OR personal pronouns
Welcome ladies & gentlemen	Welcome! OR "Welcome everyone"
Sex change / sex reassignment	Gender affirming care / transition related health care
Female / male (references sex assigned at birth)	Woman or man (references gender and gender identity)

Additional Resources

For pronoun best practices:
[What's Your Pronoun?](#)

For best practices on disability language please refer to:
[Stanford Disability Language Guide](#)

For best practices on Racial and Ethnic Identity please refer to:
[APA Style Guide on Racial and Ethnic Identity](#)