One Dance UK

Supporting Dance

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE

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The aim of this guide is to help you feel confident in using inclusive language. It is a guiding tool rather than a strict list. It is important to remember that every individual has their own preference so it's best to ask the person you're talking to or mirror the language they use.

This guide will focus on four key areas: **race, gender, disability** and **age**. We encourage you to be considerate in your thinking about other aspects of identity that go beyond this resource.

Language changes overtime. What may have been appropriate to say 20 years ago may cause offence now, just as the language in this guide may not be favourable in 20 years' time.

We aim to have an openminded approach to ever evolving language. To do that, it's important to listen to different groups, do our homework and learn from our mistakes.

Blythe by One Dance UK, Dani Bower

RACE

We can often find language related to race challenging, and may prefer to stay silent for fear of offending someone. This doesn't have to be the case.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Race, nationality and ethnicity are not the same thing and it's important to know the difference.

- Unless it is particularly relevant you should try not to describe people by their race, ethnicity or religion.

- You shouldn't say that someone's behaviour is because of their race. For example, "Black people are just better at athletics."

- If you are referring to someone's ethnicity but are unsure, make it clear that you are leaning on your perception of the individual, not fact.

- You should use the term Black as a descriptive word, e.g. a Black person.

KEY TERMS:

- **Ethnicity** can be a mixture of culture, religion, skin colour, language, the origins of individuals and their family. It can also be referred to as cultural background. We may define our own ethnicity.

- **Global Majority** includes, but is not limited to people of African, North African, South Asian, South-East Asian, East Asian, Caribbean, Latinx, Middle Eastern, Native American, Native Australian, Pacific Islanders, Roma and Traveller heritage or diaspora.

- **Mixed race or Dual heritage** should be used when referring to people who have parents or ancestors of different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

- **Nationality** refers to a person's status of belonging to a particular nation, e.g. the country where you are a legal citizen.

- **Race** was used traditionally to classify people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour. It is now more commonly used to refer to a group of persons related by a shared ancestry, or any people united by a common history or culture.

- **Roma, Romani, or Traveller** refers to an ethnic group who traditionally live a nomadic lifestyle.

Chinyanta Kabaso by One Dance UK, Dani Bower

LEARN MORE:

- **The UK Government's advice on writing about ethnicity** - https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity/

- **The Office for National Statistics ethnicity and race definitions** - https://service-manual.ons.gov.uk/content/language/ethnicity-and-race

- **A guide to race and ethnicity terminology and language** - https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/a-guide-to-race-and-ethnicity-terminology-and-language
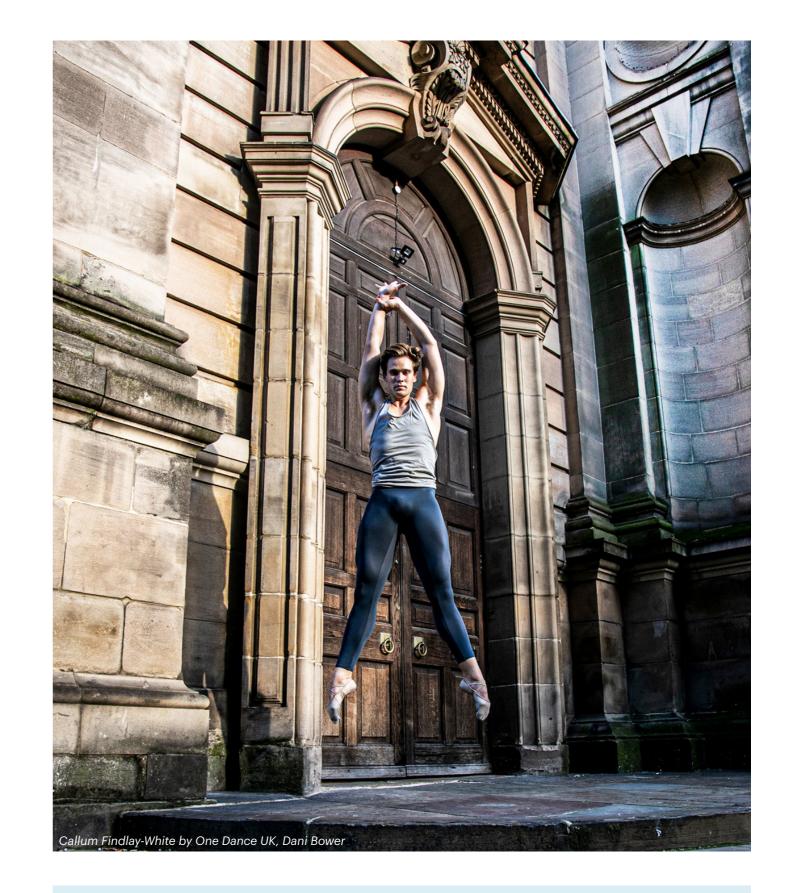
GENDER

It is important to avoid making assumptions about people's gender identity purely based on their presentation and/or name. We may consider using gender neutral language when using terms, expressions, and pronouns.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Avoid using gender descriptions when it adds nothing to the conversation e.g. instead of a 'male nurse', just use 'nurse'.

- Avoid using patronising terms that may cause offence, especially if you don't have an established relationship with the person. For example, 'love, son, sweetie, dear'.

- You may wish to include your pronouns in your email signature, or when introducing yourself. This could help others feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns with you.

KEY TERMS:

- **Chair / chairperson** is an alternative to using the term chairman.

- **Everyone / colleagues** can be used to address a crowd without gendering people.

- **Humans / humankind** is a gender neutral alternative to man / mankind.

- **LGBTQIA+** stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), intersex, asexual, and the "plus" represents other sexual identities.

- **Partner / spouse** can be used as an alternative to assuming the gender of a person someone is in a relationship with.

- **Pronouns** are words we use to refer to ourselves and others and to identify gender. Common gendered pronouns include she, her, he, him. They / them can be used as a gender neutral alternative.

- **Trans** relates to a person whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex registered for them at birth.

Callum Findlay-White by One Dance UK, Dani Bower

LEARN MORE:

- **Resources on personal pronouns** - pronouns.org.
- **How to use gender-inclusive language in dance spaces** - https://www.raestudios-sf.com/post/gender-inclusive

DISABILITY

It's ok to change the language you use around disability. What feels right in one situation might feel wrong in another. What matters most is your intention, and to respect and reflect - if a person tells you how they prefer to be described, mirror their choice when communicating with them.

For many of the 'key terms' described below there is some general agreement but not everyone will always have the same opinions. That's important to bear in mind.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Definitions of 'disability' used within the dance sector often come from the 'social model'. This proposes that a person is not disabled by any impairment, but rather by physical barriers and people's attitudes. As such, the choice to use the term 'disabled people' over 'person with disabilities' is often preferred.

- Using collective terms can reinforce unhelpful stereotypes. They also imply that the experiences of disabled people are all the same. Saying 'neurodivergent dancers are so forgetful', ignores specific differences associated with neurodiversities such as, dyspraxia, dyslexia and ADHD.

- In a dance class try being open in your use of language. For example, instead of 'walk through the space', it would be more inclusive to say 'travel through the space'.

- Try replacing 'struggles with' or 'suffers from', with 'has'. For example, 'this dancer has diabetes'.

- Shift the focus. Focus on what you're offering, rather than who you think your offering is for. For example, 'we have step free access' instead of 'we have a wheelchair ramp'.

KEY TERMS:

- **Accessible toilets/facilities** is a more inclusive way of saying 'disabled toilets/facilities'.

- **Crip** is a term that might be used by a disabled person to describe themselves.

- **deaf -** This refers to hearing loss as a medical condition. The severity is described by percentage or degree. A person who is deaf might use British Sign Language (BSL) as a second language.

- **Deaf -** A linguistic minority, people who describe themselves as 'Deaf' with a capital 'D' identity as being a part of the Deaf culture and community. This might mean that they have been deaf since before they learned to speak, and so sign language is their first language. Someone who is Deaf experiences the world kinaesthetically and visually.

- **Learning disabilities** can range from mild to severe, and a person can have one, or a combination. We understand and recognise learning disabilities as affecting intellectual ability.

- **Learning difficulty -** We understand and recognise learning difficulties as not affecting intellect. Each learning difficulty diagnosis will be experienced uniquely by the individual.

- **Spoony -** Someone who uses 'Spoon Theory' as a metaphor to explain how much daily energy they have e.g. a dancer with Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) might use phrases like, 'I have 30 spoons to use today, ballet takes up 10 of them'.

- **Neurotypical -** A person's style of thinking and learning that society considers to be the most 'normal'.

- **Neurodivergent -** A person whose style of thinking and learning might be considered as significantly different to those that are 'typical'. Someone may describe themselves as 'neurodivergent' if, for example, they have dyslexia or dyspraxia.

- **Neurodiverse -** A collective term that describes the different ways people think and learn. A group of people who are 'neurodiverse' could include people who are neuro'typical' and neuro'divergent'.

- **Wheelchair user** - try saying this instead of 'wheelchair bound'

U.Dance National Festival 2022 by One Dance UK, Dani Bower

LEARN MORE:

- **One Dance UK's 'Considering Difference – Making Dance Accessible' project** - https://www.onedanceuk.org/resources/considering-difference-making-dance-accessible
- **Unlimited - Is disability a dirty word?** - https://weareunlimited.org.uk/blog/is-disability-a-dirty-word-language-and-the-labels-we-use/
- **Mencap - What is a learning disability** - https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/what-learning-disability
- **British Deaf Association - What is Deaf culture?** - https://bda.org.uk/what-is-deaf-culture/
- **The Brain Charity - What's Spoon theory?** - https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/whats-spoon-theory/
- **Shape Arts' resource bank -** https://www.shapearts.org.uk/Listing/Category/resources
- **Quiplash, an organisation specialising in queer crip performance** - https://www.quiplash.co.uk/
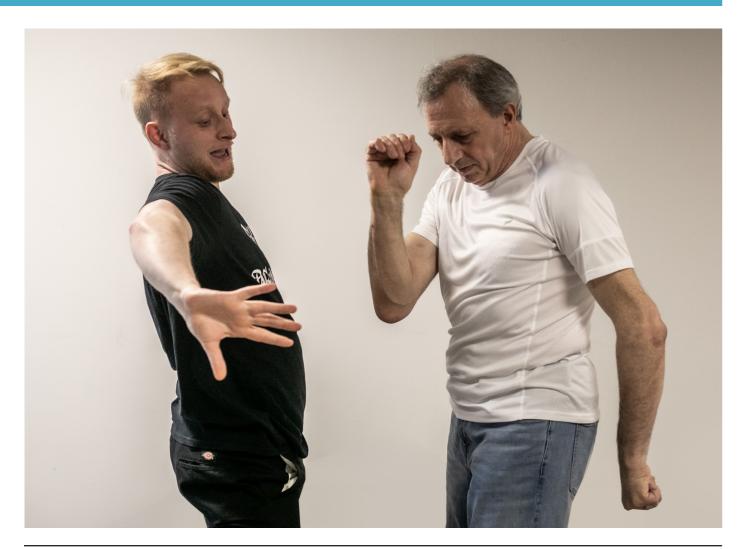
AGE

When talking about inclusion, age and ageism may not be the first thing we think of. We might however treat people differently based on their age without knowing. Through our choice of words we can challenge ageism and ageist attitudes.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Does age need to be a part of your conversation? Sometimes an age group might need to be defined - for example, in the interest of child safeguarding, or if reaching a particular age group is part of a funding agreement for your dance class. Ideally however, the focus of dance activity should be on the content rather than the age of attendees.

- If you do need to state an age range, try to be specific instead of using a general term. For example, instead of 'dance class for senior citizens', opt for 'dance class for over 60's'.

- Try not to assume a person's age or that their age reflects their capability.

- Avoid using patronising language that may seem like you're speaking down to a person, for example, 'kiddo' or 'pensioner'.

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