



Inclusive Language in Rental Housing

7 words to remove from your leasing vocabulary

Using inclusive language fosters a culture of respect that shows the organization's commitment to creating a safe and welcoming environment where everyone's opinions and experiences are valued. Millennials and Generation Z find this especially important.¹

Historically underrepresented groups are more likely to consider or buy a product after "seeing an ad they think is diverse or inclusive."²

Our words directly and indirectly impact the people who hear or read them. While not intentional, certain terms commonly used in multifamily can be considered discriminatory and non-inclusive.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Simple Words; Big Impact.

Inclusive language opens doors to new residents and sales because prospects are more likely to engage with a brand when they feel represented. In our ever-changing environment, it may be difficult to analyze all verbiage, but making simple shifts can significantly impact a person's perception. Let's look at a few introductory examples:

- 1 Guys**

Using guys to refer to a group of people, especially when they are not all male, can be seen as non-inclusive. This can be as simple as saying "Hey guys" or "you guys" with no ill intentions. Instead, use the words team, everyone, or folks.
- 2 Mr/Ms**

Are your team members instructed to address everyone as Mr. or Ms. over the phone and in their email and chat? Are they basing someone's identity on their voice? If so, this can be a slippery slope, and while many still do this as a courtesy, it may be offensive to some.
- 3 Disabled or Handicapped**

These terms can seem limiting and not inclusive. Instead, refer to individuals as people with disabilities, always using identity-first or person-first language.
- 4 Walk**

This term is overly used on community websites and in general conversations. Examples might be walking distance, walk-up stairs, and walk-in closets; consider changing to more inclusive terms such as travel distance, close proximity, or spacious closets.
- 5 He/Him or She/Her**

Whenever possible, use they/them/their if you don't know someone's preferred pronouns. When marketing dual closets or roommate bathrooms, refrain from using terms such as his or her closets and Jack and Jill bathrooms. Gender-neutral language will appeal to a larger crowd without offending anyone.
- 6 Master**

While this term has been used in real estate for decades and was not found discriminatory by HUD back in 1995, it evokes slavery and dominance, which may be offensive. Using lead, primary, or main can be better alternatives. For example, changing your marketing language from master bedroom to main or primary bedroom can make a difference.
- 7 Foreigner**

Though used in the context of qualified applications for potential residents, this term often has negative connotations. Use international students, overseas employees, or people from other countries instead.



Apartment communities that don't adopt an inclusive vocabulary won't necessarily face legal consequences. However, perception is reality, and not using inclusive language in your property description, signage, collateral, or conversations can position your community as not accessible or accommodating to all groups. Training your teams to be conscious of language when talking to each other, to prospects, and to residents will set the stage for success — and best communicate your community's mission regarding inclusion.

Grace Hill Can Help!

For more information, including tips on gender-inclusive language and a guide to using pronouns, check out our exclusive microlearning boosters in Vision.



¹Pew Research Center. "Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues."

²Inclusive ads are affecting consumer behavior, according to new research," Shelley Zalis, thinkwithgoogle.com, 2019.