

ACS Inclusivity Style Guide

TIP SHEET Socioeconomic status

For more context, review the “[Socioeconomic status](#)” section of the Inclusivity Style Guide. Use this tip sheet in combination with the “[General guidelines](#)” tip sheet.

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:** Consider donating 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:** Buying a car is 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Avoid outdated and generalizing terms for countries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

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www.acs.org/inclusivityguide