



INCLUSIVITY, DIVERSITY and EQUALITY

A Guide to Useful Terms

British Skydiving has compiled this guide to help those involved with training, instructing, developing resources, providing social media content and working with customers, and all others who support the Association's vision of an inclusive sport in which all are respected, supported, valued, empowered and treated fairly.



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1: Introduction

Most of us try to avoid falling into preconceived, negative responses towards others based on characteristics such as religion, ethnicity or age. However, in reality, we all operate according to an 'affinity bias;' a tendency to connect with people who look and seem most like ourselves. We generally find it much easier to surround ourselves with those who share our interests and have similar characteristics. Being in an 'affinity group' brings a level of familiarity and comfort; it puts us at ease. Unfortunately, this also brings an 'in-group bias' to most of our interactions.

Even when we set our sights on being inclusive and moving beyond our in-group biases, we can find ourselves uncertain of how to talk to someone or to refer to someone who is not part of our in-group. Talking about matters such as ethnicity and disability is complex and can feel uncomfortable for a number of reasons particularly when it means examining the thinking and assumptions behind the terms that we use to describe people. Trying to make sure we use the right words and give some thought to how our speech impacts those around us is an important part of being inclusive and dismantling the barriers that might prevent some of our customers, colleagues and jump buddies from continuing and progressing within the sport, or just having a great time on their one and only tandem jump.

Language is largely dependent on context, and a term preferred by one person or group may not be acceptable to another. so there is often no clear agreement around the best terms to use or the ones to avoid. Recognising all this can lead to nervousness around those outside our affinity groups, which in turn often generates subtle, unconscious behaviours that actually promote divisions, such as not speaking directly to an individual, not making eye contact with them or laughing when trying to pronounce their name.

It's helpful to remember that:

- the other person is just that, another person, and unlikely to be offended if you are polite and respectful.
- those who might be offended by a genuine question are few and far between, and most people will be more than happy if you ask them how they would like to be referred to, or how to pronounce their name.
- owning and learning from your mistakes, and a sincere apology if you get something wrong, goes a long way to making people feel welcome.
- language continually evolves, so keep listening and learning. For example, occasionally check resources that can be relied on to have the most up-to-date information.

With all this in mind, British Skydiving has drawn from a range of resources (see Section 3) to put together some information regarding terms that might be useful around skydiving.



ROB LLOYD



2: Which Terms Should I Use?

2.1. Some terms to avoid, and a few alternatives

ABLE-BODIED

While it can be an accurate definition, this term is generally used inaccurately. Describing someone as able-bodied suggests they do not have any physical impairment, and it implies some are not able, or are less capable than others, but in the real world some bodies are more able than others, and ability is often far more complex than this one-dimensional view allows. The preferred terms are generally non-disabled or people without visible disabilities, which acknowledges that we often cannot tell whether someone has a disability just by their physical appearance.

ACCESSIBILITY

Using terms such as disability friendly or disabled access highlights difficulty or inability, while describing facilities in terms such as disabled toilets or disabled parking is just wrong - toilets and parking bays are not disabled! More appropriate phrasing and signage includes accessible toilets or accessible parking and parking for blue or orange badge holders.



ASIAN

An umbrella term for people whose geographical ethnic family origins can be traced back to the Indian sub-continent and East Asia. It is generally seen as inadequate because it subsumes the diverse social, geographical, cultural and religious differences of the people it incorporates, making it virtually meaningless. This means it is generally wise to avoid the term and refer instead to specific ethnicities or nationalities, such as Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese.

BAME

This acronym for Black and Asian & Minority Ethnic gradually replaced BME (Black and Minority Ethnic), which was significant as it acknowledged the distinct Asian population in the UK. However, both are now recognised as overly simplistic and ineffective ways to describe people from ethnic backgrounds that constitute a statistical minority in the UK. In 2021, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities recommended that BAME was no longer used and ethnic minority groups should be referred to individually. So, rather than “she’s a skydiver from a BAME background” it is better to be specific and use phrases such as “she’s from a black British background” or “they are a Pakistani skydiver.”



DISABLED PERSON OR PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

These are both acceptable terms, but there are split views over the appropriateness of each and it is a personal choice which someone uses to identify themselves. So, it's generally best to ask someone what their preferred term is. Some people argue that they do not own a disability but are instead 'disabled' by the fact that the world around them isn't built with accessibility in mind. It is generally best to avoid the term 'differently-abled' as some find it patronising and inaccurate. It is also best to avoid negative phrases like "my coach has mobility problems" or "they suffer from ..." Try to use neutral or positive phrases instead, such as "my teammate uses a mobility aid" and "my coach has ..."

OLD

This is often used as a derogatory term. Older is a good alternative as everyone is older than someone. Older or seasoned can also be good alternatives, as they imply advanced emotional development, lived experience and complexity accrued over time.



KATIE WILKINSON



RACE

A categorisation that is based mainly on physical attributes or traits, similar appearances or skin colour. We can see problems with racial categorisation at play in the way race designations have changed over time. For example, in the United States today, Irish, Italian and Jewish people are considered white, but were previously categorised as 'non-white.' The term ethnicity has generally been used to refer to long shared cultural experiences, religious practices, traditions, ancestry, language, dialect or national origins. Consequently, it can be seen as a more positive way of framing identity and is more commonly used within diversity questionnaires in the UK. However, the term race is still very much in use: shared negative experiences of racism mean that racial identity is important to many and race-based language provides a basis for collective organising and support.

YOUNG

Using this term to address anyone who is not actually a young person is generally condescending and infantilising. It also implicitly reinforces ageism through negative positioning of older

people. Particular care should be taken using the term girl(s) when males are being addressed as man / men in the same context as this subtly reinforces power imbalances, even while appearing on the surface as a form of support or compliment.

2.2. What's generally good to use, and useful to know

ABLEISM

This term is used to refer to dominant attitudes in society that assume there is an ideal body and mind, leading to discriminatory behaviours toward people who differ from this norm.

ALLY

Generally refers to a person who actively supports members of a social group other than their own affinity group, which might involve acknowledging disadvantage and oppression, becoming informed and/or taking action. It can involve using one's position of privilege to help or support those in a more marginalised group.

BISEXUAL OR BI

Used to indicate an attraction towards more than one gender. Bi people may also describe themselves using terms such as pansexual, bi-curious, queer.



CISGENDER OR CIS

Refers to someone whose gender identity matches their assigned sex.

ETHNIC MINORITY, MINORITY ETHNIC OR MINORITISED ETHNIC

These terms generally refer to ethnic groups that are in a minority in the population. So, in the UK, these terms usually cover all ethnic groups except the majority ethnicity, white British. This means they include white minority ethnic groups such as Polish, Roma and Irish Traveller. Minority ethnic is sometimes preferred over ethnic minority; by not putting 'ethnic' first, 'minority ethnic' better recognises the fact that everyone has an ethnicity, including white British people. Minoritised ethnic is a more recent addition that better reflects the fact that ethnic groups that are minorities in the UK can be majorities in the global population.

GENDER

Although someone's sense of their gender is often aligned with the sex they assigned at birth, the notion of a male/female gender division based on chromosomes and genitalia is widely seen as a social and cultural construct rather than a biological given. Those who's gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth, may 'transition' to the 'other' gender and describe themselves as transgender (often shortened to trans – see below). The term genderqueer is used by some who identify with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders while gender-fluid and non-binary indicate that someone does not align with this male/female binary. Terms such as gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender and nongender may also be used.

GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

Words used to refer to people that are not associated with a particular grammatical or social gender and do not imply male or female. For example, the English pronouns he and she are implicitly gendered, as are her and him, whereas they and them are gender-neutral and can be used in the singular as well as plural.



INTERSECTIONALITY

Refers to the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It hinges on the recognition that a person can have multiple identities and can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in the UK does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman in the same context nor inequalities identical to those experienced by a Black man; each intersection of race, gender, age etc. produces a qualitatively distinct experience.

INTERSEX

Sex is generally used to relate to biological characteristics, physical and physiological features such as chromosomes, genitalia or gene expression. On this basis an individual's sex is assigned at birth as male / female, but there are variations of sex characteristics called intersex. This is an umbrella term for individuals born with natural variations in biological or physiological characteristics that do not fit traditional definitions of male / female. This may be apparent at birth but often not until puberty, or in the case of some women, when they conceive or try to conceive.



LGBTQI / LGBTQ+

The acronyms for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (or queer), intersex + other gender variants. These are currently seen as the most all-encompassing acronyms for the gay community, including those with non-cis gender identities. The acronym LGBTQIA is a useful recent addition that refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual (or allied).

MULTIRACIAL, MIXED HERITAGE, DUAL HERITAGE, MIXED-RACE, MIXED-ETHNICITY

All describe a person who has parentage or ancestors from more than one ethnic group. As mentioned above, it is generally better to refer to ethnicity rather than race so these terms are preferred rather than others such as biracial, multiracial and mixed-race.

PEOPLE OF COLOUR

Racial justice advocates (particularly in the USA) have been using this term since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying frame across different racial groups that are not white. This can be a politically useful term and describes people according to their own attributes (as opposed to what they are not, e.g., non-white). However, the same issues apply here as mentioned under BAME above; it is generally preferable to identify people through their own ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience and meaning.

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The Equality Act 2010 identifies nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity. The Act makes it unlawful for an organisation to discriminate against someone, victimise them or harass them, directly or indirectly, because of these protected characteristics in various areas of life, including employment, education and the provision of services.

QUEER

A term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBT community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc.). Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it has been firmly reclaimed by sections of the queer community.

TRANSITIONING

Refers to the steps a transgender person (or trans person / trans man / trans woman) takes to live in the gender with which they identify, which could involve medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to take that path.

WHITE FRAGILITY

A state that affects some white people in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves that include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear and guilt, and behaviours such as argumentation, silence and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

This term refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. These accumulated advantages are reflected in areas such as life-expectancy and other health outcomes, income and wealth, different access to opportunities and resources etc. These privileges exist at the structural, institutional, cultural, interpersonal and individual levels, and generally white people who experience such privileges do so without being conscious of it.

ZERO SUM GAME

This phrase refers to the idea that if one person gains something, another person loses something. This is often seen when an organisation works to make underrepresented groups feel more included, and dominant groups in the organisation believe that they lose, or are at risk of losing, power, influence and clout to these underrepresented groups.

3: Useful Links

The terms and comments in this guide make use of the resources list below.

Language is continuously evolving and, while the above was correct at the time of publishing, we highly recommend using resources such as these to keep up with ongoing changes.

- <https://www.brap.org.uk/post/race-fluency>
- <https://celebratingdisability.co.uk/how-to-talk-about-disability/>
- <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication>
- <https://www.hivelearning.com/site/diversity-inclusion-glossary/>
- <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/a-guide-to-race-and-ethnicity-terminology-and-language>
- <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>
- <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/end-the-awkward/>
- <https://www.sportingequals.org.uk/>
- <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms>
- <https://style.ons.gov.uk/category/house-style/language-and-spelling/>
- https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1

