

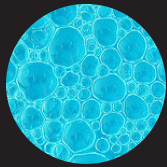
Inclusive Language

Because our language evolves and develops as a part of our culture, many words and phrases connote prejudice or were derived from prejudiced situations. Actively avoiding language with racist, ableist, or sexist origins is one way to promote an inclusive environment. While it is impossible to strip all of our language of negative connotations, it is possible to be mindful of how seemingly innocuous language can be exclusive and demeaning to others.



"Basket Case"

This term is generally used to denote a person who cannot cope or a country experiencing financial difficulties. However, it was originally used in World War I to denote a person who had lost all four limbs and was incapable of independent movement.



"Lame"

Today, "lame" is often used to mean "uncool" but it also is an older term used to refer to an inability to walk or an injury, typically in a limb. It is ableist to use a word related to a disability as a general pejorative.



"Off the Reservation"

Currently, this phrase is used to indicate that someone is deviating from the norm, however in the nineteenth century the phrase literally referenced Native Americans leaving the designated reservation land to which they had been confined.



"Gyp" or "Gypped" or "Jip" or "Jipped"

Typically used to describe feeling cheated or disadvantaged, "gypped" is actually a reference to the term "gypsy" an offensive term used to inaccurately refer to the Romani people.



"No Can Do"

This phrase is often used to mean "I can't do that," but originally emerged in the nineteenth century and mocked Chinese immigrants' speech patterns in English.



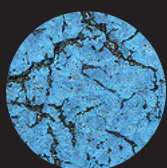
"Long Time No See"

While today the phrase is used to indicate that significant time has passed, similar to "no can do" "long time no see" originally mimicked and denigrated Chinese or Native American speech patterns.



"Grandfather clause" or "Grandfathered in"

While you may have used this phrase to refer to someone being subject to an older (usually less stringent) set of standards because of the length of their affiliation with an organization, the origins of this term refer to post-Civil War attempts to disenfranchise black people by creating strict requirements for new voters that did not apply to the descendants of those who voted prior to 1867. It was primarily those white people who were "grandfathered in" to the vote.



Negative words referencing women

While the words and phrases above have become normalized and lost some of their earlier connotations, words referring to women tend to move in the opposite direction, undergoing "perjoration" where the meaning of the word worsens over time, far more often than words about men. Words like "mistress," "hussy," "madam," "spinster," "wench," and "tart" all originated with fully reputable definitions. The male equivalents of such words, like "master" and "sir" have not undergone perjoration and generally connote power and authority. It is important to speak with care and avoid using feminized language to indicate negative qualities as linguists have shown that this process effects woman-specific language disproportionately.