



Reducing bias in language: labels

In general, you should call people what they prefer to be called, especially when dealing with race and ethnicity. However, you should avoid labeling whenever possible. When you use terms such as "the elderly" or "the amnesiacs," the people lose their individuality. One way to avoid this is to insert an adjective (e.g., "elderly people," "amnesic patients"). Another way is to mention the person first and follow this with a descriptive phrase (e.g., "people diagnosed with amnesia"), although it can be cumbersome to keep repeating phrases like this.

If you conducted an experiment, you can use labels to describe your participants by the measures you used to classify them, as long as the labels are not offensive. For example, if you had people take a test measuring their reaction times and you were interested in looking at the differences between people who had fast reaction times and those with slow reaction times, you could call the first group the "fast reaction time group" and the second the "slow reaction time group."

For more about appropriate presentation of and reference to people in your text, see the following resources from the APA Style Website:

- Removing Bias in Language: Disabilities
<http://www.apastyle.org/disabilities.html>
- Removing Bias in Language: Race and Ethnicity
<http://www.apastyle.org/race.html>
- Removing Bias in Language: Sexuality
<http://www.apastyle.org/sexuality.html>

The following information must remain intact on every handout printed for distribution.

This page is located at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/APA/print/labels.html>

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