



# Think Before You Speak.

Creating and maintaining a safe, open,  
and welcoming environment through

## Inclusive Language

Diversity & Equity Office  
Wilfrid Laurier University

# What is Inclusive Language?

- Inclusive Language is language that does not exclude, insult, trivialize or stereotype on the basis of gender, disability, and race.
- It means avoiding any language that could offend, demean, or promote stereotypes about a particular group.
- While Inclusive Language is not the same as “political correctness,” it means choosing language that is welcoming and acceptable to people of all genders, races, and abilities.

# Why is **Inclusive Language** important?

- Un-inclusive language reinforces negative attitudes and sets up barriers that can be difficult for members of your community to overcome.
- Even if your language is not intended to harass or discriminate, it can still have a negative effect. It is important to be conscious of the language you use to avoid being hurtful and exclusive.
- All members of your community have the right to feel safe, welcome, and accepted. Students and staff have a responsibility to be aware of the potential impact of their language and challenge themselves and others to speak inclusively.

# Be aware of the language you use.

Commonly used un-inclusive words and phrases.

“that’s so gay”

“that test raped me”

“that’s what she said”

“Gypped” or “jewed”

“that’s retarded”

Boyfriend or girlfriend

“you’re so retarded”

(use “partner” instead)

**Even if these words are not used to intentionally harm people, these terms and others can be hurtful and offensive. *Think before you speak* to avoid language that could alienate and offend members or your community .**

# Think Before you Speak:

## **Choosing Inclusive Language**

- Choose language that groups would commonly use to identify and describe themselves
- Choose language that is gender inclusive
- Choose language that does not racially profile
- Choose language that does not stereotype social roles or occupations by gender or race
- Choose language that focuses on the person rather than the disability


# Things to Remember

- Everyone has had different experiences and will respond to and be affected by your language in different ways. Be proactive and respectful.
- Choose language that...
  - Will not exclude or create boundaries
  - Will not alienate, demean, or hurt others
  - Will not resurface negative memories
- Use language that promotes a safe and inclusive community environment, respects diversity, and is welcoming to all.

Questions about using Inclusive Language? Talk to your Don or contact the Diversity & Equity Office ([diversity@wlu.ca](mailto:diversity@wlu.ca))

**gay** (gā) 1. there once was a time when all “gay” meant was “happy.” then it meant “homosexual.” now, people are saying “that’s so gay” to mean dumb and stupid. which is pretty insulting to gay people (and we don’t mean the “happy” people). 2. so please, knock it off. 3. go to [ThinkB4YouSpeak.com](http://ThinkB4YouSpeak.com)

**dyke** (dīk) 1. be honest with yourself. you’re not thinking of “an embankment that holds back and controls water.” the problem is, words like “dyke” and “faggot” are so commonly used as insults these days, it’s really hard to remember a time when they weren’t. 2. so please, knock it off. 3. learn more at [ThinkB4YouSpeak.com](http://ThinkB4YouSpeak.com)



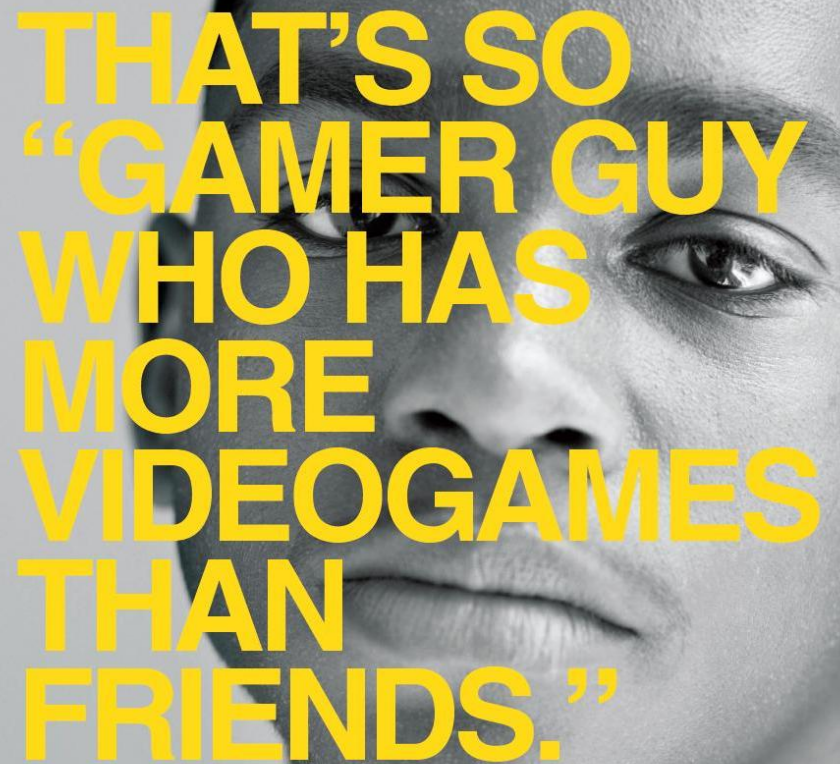
THAT'S SO  
"CHEER-  
LEADER  
WHO LIKE,  
CAN'T LIKE,  
SAY SMART  
STUFF."

*Think that's mean? How do you  
think "that's so gay" sounds?  
Hurtful. So, knock it off.*

[ThinkB4YouSpeak.com](http://ThinkB4YouSpeak.com)

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THAT'S SO  
"GAMER GUY  
WHO HAS  
MORE  
VIDEOGAMES  
THAN  
FRIENDS."

*Think that's mean? How do you  
think "that's so gay" sounds?  
Hurtful. So, knock it off.*

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