

A Guide to Inclusivity



For Wedding, Ceremony, and Event Professionals

Contents

Intellectual Property Notice	- 2 -
Contributors	- 2 -
Ky Richardson (they/them): Regulatory Solicitor, Inclusivity Consultant, Founder of LGBTQ Equality Weddings and Co-Founder of We Are Queer LDN	- 2 -
Kim Myers (she/her): Assoc. CIPD – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Consultant	- 3 -
Jessica Oddi (she/her): Disabled Designer	- 3 -
Fox Fisher (he/they): Award-winning Artist, Author, Filmmaker, Campaigner	- 4 -
Ugla Stefanía Kristjónudóttir Jónsdóttir (Owl)(they/them): Award-winning Trans Activist	- 4 -
Note on contributors and editions	- 4 -
Our Core Values	- 6 -
Introduction	- 7 -
An Ethical Guide to inclusive design, projects, and events by Jessica Oddi	- 8 -
Summary	- 8 -
Questions to ask at the outset	- 8 -
Conclusion: The 3 Cs	- 9 -
How to use this Guide	- 10 -
Don't Assume; Do Ask (where relevant and appropriate)	- 12 -
Gender, Sex, and Sexual Orientation	- 14 -
Gender Identities	- 15 -
Gender Segregation	- 17 -
Products	- 17 -
Services	- 18 -
Toilets	- 18 -
General Accessibility Considerations	- 19 -
Physical Disabilities	- 19 -
Blind/Low-Vision	- 19 -

Deaf/Hard of Hearing	- 20 -
Neurodivergent/Developmental Disabilities	- 20 -
Honorifics/Titles/Salutations	- 21 -
Jargon, Idioms, and Acronyms	- 22 -
Disability Terms	- 23 -
Identity First vs Person First	- 24 -
Pronouns	- 25 -
Sexual Orientation Terms	- 27 -
Word/Phrase Swaps	- 28 -
Styled shoots from a commercial perspective	- 35 -
Styled shoots from a disability perspective	- 36 -
Styled shoots from an LGBTQ+ perspective	- 36 -
Styled shoots from a race and ethnicity perspective	- 39 -
Hair	- 40 -
Make-up	- 40 -
Photography	- 40 -
Colourism	- 40 -
Tokenism and stereotyping	- 41 -
Cultural Appropriation vs Cultural Appreciation	- 41 -
Design and Web Accessibility	- 42 -
Colour and Typography	- 42 -
Website Design Resources	- 42 -
Social Media Accessibility: Alt Text	- 43 -
Social Media Accessibility: Image Descriptions	- 43 -
Social Media Accessibility: Closed Captioning/Transcripts	- 43 -
Social Media Accessibility: Post Captions/Hashtags	- 43 -
Conclusion	- 44 -
A Guide to Inclusivity 2023	- 46 -

Intellectual Property Notice

By accepting this Guide, you have obtained the rights to view and print a copy of it for your personal use. This Guide must not be reproduced or distributed in any other way, to any other person or business. We reserve the right to take legal action for any breach of this Notice.

If you believe that a colleague or friend will benefit from the lived experience in this Guide, please ask them to follow [The Career Queer on Instagram](#) and request their own copy. Thank you for adhering to this Notice.

Contributors

Ky Richardson (they/them): Regulatory Solicitor, Inclusivity Consultant, Founder of [LGBTQ Equality Weddings](#) and Co-Founder of [We Are Queer LDN](#)

Contributed to first and second edition.

Ky is a passionate advocate for prioritising lived experience and factoring it in to all diversity, inclusivity, and business decisions. They bring their lived experience as a queer, non-binary, polyamorous person and their professional experience of advocacy, research, and anti-discrimination to their work.

They have reviewed 150+ small business websites/copy to remove assumptions/language that may exclude and help their clients be more accessible to more people. They proudly developed an LGBTQ+ training module for The Savvy Celebrant's new course due to be launched in the 2022: [Diversity 101 training for wedding industry professionals](#).

They are committed both professionally and personally to ensuring an intersectional approach by amplifying diverse voices and ensuring that lived experience and emotional labour is paid for fairly and valued as a necessary step in informing inclusive policy and businesses.

For insight and consultancy or just to be friends: [@the.career.queer](#)

Kim Myers (she/her): Assoc. CIPD – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Consultant

Contributed to second edition.

Kim is a cultivator of diverse and inclusive workforces and has experience of building EDI leadership support from the very top of an organisation. She is also an experienced EDI training facilitator, and a specialist in racial inclusivity.

Kim has designed and facilitated culture and heritage workshops for the Mayor of London and London Borough of Waltham Forest and is also a talented ‘artist’ combining her artistic talents with her activism and love of roller-skating.

For consultancy services: kim@kimsmyers.com
Instagram (for art, including commissions): [@kimartee](https://www.instagram.com/kimartee)

Jessica Oddi (she/her): Disabled Designer

Contributed to second edition.

Jessica is a disabled, freelance graphic designer with ten years of espresso-fuelled experience.

She specializes in accessible design, disability representation, and inclusion. Based in Canada, Jess loves working on projects that empower marginalized communities. Whether it be collaborations or community support, she believes in an equitable approach to design.

In her spare time, she leads multiple disability-focused campaigns. From [The Disabled Life](#) with her sister Lianna, to [Intimately Disabled](#) and other community groups. She is currently working on [Access Design Collective](#), a space to learn from and highlight disabled designers from all lived experiences.

For design services: jessicaoddi.com
To connect: oddi.jessica@gmail.com
Instagram: [@oddi.jessica](https://www.instagram.com/oddi.jessica)

Fox Fisher (he/they): Award-winning Artist, Author, Filmmaker, Campaigner

Contributed to second edition.

Fox is an award-winning artist, filmmaker, and trans campaigner. They are the co-founder of [My Generation](#), a film project that celebrates trans lives and trans experiences. They are the co-founder of Trans Pride Brighton and are an advisor for All About Trans. They are the co-author and illustrator of the Trans Teen Survival Guide, the Trans Survival Workbook, and the illustrator of the Trans Pride Colouring Book.

In 2017, they were awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Brighton for their contribution to raising awareness of trans issues.

For all services: www.foxfisher.com

Ugla Stefanía Kristjónudóttir Jónsdóttir (Owl)(they/them): Award-winning Trans Activist

Contributed to second edition.

Owl is an author, feminist, and trans advocate. They are the co-director of My Generation and advisor for All About Trans. They are a columnist for the Metro, as well as regularly contributing to other mainstream platforms such as the Guardian, the Independent, and iNews.

In 2019, they were listed on BBC's 100 Most Influential Women list.

Instagram: [@uglastefania](#)

Note on contributors and editions

You will note that not all contributors contribute to all editions. The edition that each contributor has contributed to will be noted in their bio above, where their contributions have been taken forward in later editions, whether updated, amended, or in their original form.

It is therefore important to note that contribution to one edition does not amount to endorsement by that contributor of another edition.

Some contributors have also been asked not to be credited beyond the editions that they contributed to.

Our Core Values

LGBTQ Equality Weddings and The Career Queer adopt the following Core Values and we invite you to adopt these values in your business (and life) too. You probably already do! We also very much welcome publication of these Core Values on your website, and should you choose to do so, we simply ask for the relevant copyright notice (noted below) to be included, and for the wording of the Core Values not to be altered:

- To strive not to assume a person's gender identity, sex characteristics, or sexual orientation based on their appearance or otherwise.
- To strive not to assume a person's race(s), culture(s), or religion(s)/faith(s) based on their appearance or otherwise.
- To respect and follow a person's instruction as to how they'd like to be addressed, including gender and disability pronouns¹.
- To strive to create accessible environments for disabled clients by meeting individual access requirements.
- To share insight and knowledge with others, where possible, and where appropriate.
- To endeavour to encourage the representation of all groups/communities when contributing to styled shoots, especially underrepresented groups/communities.
- To strive to continue to educate ourselves on equality generally.
- To be kind and supportive to our colleagues and peers if unintentional mistakes are made in relation to inclusive language.
- To act with honesty and integrity.
- To help build a community who are united in making the wedding industry, and the world, a more inclusive place.

© LGBTQ Equality Weddings, 2021-2023. All rights reserved.

¹ Examples of disability pronouns include but are not limited to, disabled, neurodiverse, ND.

Introduction

Welcome to your Guide to Inclusivity; we are delighted that you care about people as much as we do! We hope that you find this Guide informative and that it helps you contribute to building a more compassionate and inclusive wedding business and industry, prioritising all people in love.

You're here, so you are aware that creating accessible spaces and services does not happen by accident or through good intentions alone; we must be intentional, which means consulting and collaborating and being consistently curious. We must continuously absorb insight from both professional and lived experience perspectives, in equal measure.

This Guide is designed to provide you with what we believe to be the basics, applied where possible to the wedding industry, so that you can begin to look at and tweak the language you use throughout your business and life, to ensure that you're not inadvertently excluding or 'othering' anyone. It's also designed to be thought provoking.

By investing time and energy into learning from each other, we will be more equipped to show respect to all people, to acknowledge and support inclusivity, and to understand the access needs of people visiting our websites, buying our products, or using our services.

Remember, language and customs change rapidly; what we learn today, may change tomorrow. Considering this, we recommend keeping an open mind, finding peace with the fact that honest mistakes will be made, and always validating your couples. A dictionary (or our) definition of terms will never supersede a couples' description of or understanding of a term they use for their own identities. Trust your couples; only they know what's right for them.

This is not a complete guide to diversity and inclusion, so we recommend that it forms only part of your commitment to educating and equipping yourself with the knowledge that you need to be truly inclusive. It doesn't touch on the Equality Act 2010, and it doesn't constitute legal advice, so be sure to make your legal obligations part of your learning going forwards.

Thank you for striving to be a, you don't need to ask here, business!

Summary

An Ethical Guide to inclusive design by Jessica Oddi³ outlines how to incorporate and approach representation in your business endeavours, without inadvertently tokenising or appropriating the groups/communities you are seeking to represent.

It contains general advice on adding diversity to design practices, projects, and events, and important questions to ask at the outset, to ensure that you're working in an ethical way, and for the right reasons.

At the base level, we should be diverse in our work and businesses, as well as making our businesses accessible to diverse clients; we are contributing to the overall lens in which our industry is viewed.

Diversifying our businesses isn't simply to 'check the diversity box'; it's to represent the society that we live, work, and create in, which includes members of marginalized groups/communities, and to make our products and services accessible to all.

Questions to ask at the outset

- What is the purpose/intention behind my project?
- Is it going to provide a valuable resource to the group/community I seek to represent?
- Will it make my products/services more accessible to that group/community?
- Does the message behind the project harm/exclude another marginalized group/community?⁴
- Have I involved members of the group/community?
- Do I plan to hire and fairly compensate consultants who are members of the group/community I seek to represent?

² With small additions by Ky Richardson.

³ <https://jessicaoddi.com/resources/an-ethical-guide-to-inclusive-design/>

⁴ i.e., have I considered intersectionality?

- Am I the best person to be leading the project, or would a member of the group/community I seek to represent be better placed to lead/inform it?
- Am I profiting from a marginalized group/community⁵, rather than working to make my own business more accessible?
- Am I being transparent about where the proceeds/profits are going?⁶

Conclusion: The 3 Cs

When in doubt, remember these three considerations when adding diversity and inclusion to your business, or participating in any diverse project:

1. **Consult** – Reach out to marginalized groups/communities before starting a project; they must be involved from the outset, not as an afterthought, and their inclusion should be factored into the project budget.
2. **Collaborate** – Work with marginalized groups/communities and make sure a project is intersectional. Nothing for us, without us. The danger of creating something for a community you're not part of, is that it will be through your lens only.
3. **Credit** – Credit and fairly compensate the people who helped/consulted/contributed or inspired you in any way. Pay people and promote their work – amplify their voices.

⁵ **Warning:** It is easy to misrepresent/tokenize/capitalize on a marginalized group/community that we are not part of, due to a lack of education/insight into their lived experiences. Be careful not to take away work from skillful members of marginalized groups/communities by creating/offering group/community focused services that are best provided by, or in collaboration with, the specific group/community that they're aimed to represent/benefit.

⁶ If you are benefiting from a project, financially or commercially, without including (and fairly compensating) members from that group/community, it is unethical. Transparency of profits/benefit is key.

How to use this Guide

We recommend absorbing this Guide several times before you attempt to apply the insight to your business. Some of us like to make notes as we go along. We all take in information differently so choose the best method for you.

Once comfortable that you've absorbed the information (perhaps you knew a lot already!), we recommend setting aside some time to conduct a full review of the language used throughout your business, to include your website, brochure(s), email campaigns, social media accounts, flyers, and even invoices! It might be easier to review one area of your business each week, or set aside a chunk of time, outside of wedding season, to fully engage with the process. You will be adding just as much value to your business by undertaking this work as you will to the people accessing it. It's a win-win.

We recommend keeping this Guide, and any notes you've taken, readily available, to refer to during your review of your business or should a particular diversity and inclusivity question arise in the day-to-day running of your business.

When carrying out your review, we recommend the following basic points:

- Look out for gendered language or gender specific roles.⁷
- Look out for ableist language.⁸
- Look out for accidental assumptions made about your readers.⁹
- Look out for non-disabled standards, i.e., language that excludes the disabled community when discussing weddings in general, or language which includes set ways of doing something that isn't adaptable for disabled people.¹⁰
- Think about the fact that a person from a marginalised group/community might be looking for a clue that you're inclusive

⁷ She/Him/Female/Male/Guys/Girls/Brides/Grooms.

⁸ Differently abled/able bodied/crazy/lame.

⁹ Not everyone wants to have a first dance, for example.

¹⁰ Examples: suggesting a venue that requires steps up to the altar, assuming a person wouldn't want to use their mobility device for the event, opting for a head table that doesn't accommodate a person's height, overpraising a partner for being in an inter-abled relationship, or assuming that two disabled people can't be together/or that disabled people only marry each other.

and informed, i.e., words matter as much as, or even more than, a rainbow flag, BLM, or a wheelchair accessible sign.

- Think about empowering your potential clients regardless of how they identify; think about ways to be more general to include cisgender/heterosexual and LGBTQ+ people, non-disabled and disabled people, and all cultures/ethnicities together, rather than attempting to speak to two (or more) demographics separately, as this can sometimes create a sense of 'us and them'; no one wants to be 'othered'.¹¹
- Think about whether you have used any of the words/phrases in the Words/Phrase Swap section below and how you might replace them if you have.
- Try to avoid taking comfort in normative approaches/seeking solace in the status quo, for example, if some members of the LGBTQ+ community don't mind being referred to collectively as queer, but some prefer not to be because of its historic use as a slur, avoid using it as a collective. Another example is where some members of the disabled community do not take issue with the use of the ableist term, 'crazy', but some do; we recommend avoiding using the term, safe in the knowledge that the goal is that everyone feels included, not just an assumed spokesperson from each community. We call this the 'one person principle'; if one person feels excluded, we will find a way to include them.

Now, let's dive in...

¹¹ Of course, there will be some situations where specificity is essential, and judgement should be exercised on whether the most inclusive approach is to be more general (with broad perspectives considered) or more specific, because a certain group has specific needs and requirements. Critical analysis is always required when deciding on how best to be inclusive in any given situation.

Don't Assume; Do Ask (where relevant and appropriate)

- Don't assume a person's gender identity, sex characteristics, or sexual orientation based on their appearance or otherwise.
- Don't assume a person's race(s), culture(s), religion(s)/faith(s), or disability based on their appearance or otherwise.
- Don't assume or automatically use a certain personal pronoun.¹²
- Don't assume that one person will take the surname of the other.
- Don't assume titles/salutations/wedding party roles.
- Don't assume parent(s) (or any family member) will be present.
- Don't assume, based on a person's gender identity, sex characteristics, sexual orientation¹³, race(s), culture(s), religion(s)/faith(s), disability or otherwise that a wedding will or will not include traditions.
- Don't assume that a disabled person will/will not want adaptations to their wedding based on their disability, i.e., some people may not want a first dance, some may, regardless of wheelchair use or not. Some may not want to walk down the aisle with their mobility aid, some may – do not assume that people will want to hide/or feel ashamed of their mobility aids.
- Don't assume that everyone is comfortable with being placed under the LGBTQ+ umbrella.
- Don't assume that everyone with a disability is comfortable with being placed under the disabled umbrella.
- Don't assume that every person who identifies as LGBTQ+ likes rainbows or wants to incorporate them into their wedding.

¹² We use personal pronouns all the time so even if you've never heard of this phrase, you know what they are! Your personal pronouns are the words you'd like others to use when they refer to you not by your name. Example, Charlie uses **she/her** personal pronouns and here's an example of them in use:

I recently met Charlie of Equality Weddings. **She** was very passionate about equality; I share **her** enthusiasm. ✓

I recently met Charlie of Equality Weddings. **He** was very passionate about equality; I share **his** enthusiasm. ✗

And if Charlie used, **they/them** personal pronouns (gender-neutral) this usage would be correct:

I recently met Charlie of Equality Weddings. **They** were very passionate about equality; I share **their** enthusiasm. More on personal pronouns below.

¹³ It's a common misconception that LGBTQ+ couples always want to break with tradition. This is not always the case. Tradition has historically been unkind to LGBTQ+ couples but it still might be incredibly meaningful to some. Try to avoid making this assumption and be led by your couple.

- Don't assume that a person who identifies as LGBTQ+, is Black, Indigenous, a person of colour, or disabled, will necessarily be aware of or support everything in this report.¹⁴
- Don't assume that everyone is comfortable with their images being posted online or on social media, even if you reserve the right to use them in your contract.
- Don't assume only same sex or gay when you see LGBTQ+.¹⁵

- Do ask for full names including a title/salutation (if any) that your couples would like to be addressed with, both before and after they're married.
- Do ask what gender and/or disability pronouns¹⁶ your couples use.
- Do ask whether anyone intends to change their name after they are married.
- Do ask whether your couples would like to adopt wedding titles/roles and if so, which ones.
- Do ask whether your couple would like alternative role ideas if there's any suggestion they'd prefer gender-neutral roles but are unsure of what to use.¹⁷
- Do ask whether there are any titles/roles that your couple do not wish to use and if so, which ones.
- Do ask for the titles/roles to be used for your couples' wedding party.
- Do ask whether your couple would like to honour any tradition(s).
- Do ask whether your couple or their guests have any accessibility requirements and define or elaborate on the meaning of accessibility, i.e., would anyone prefer to sit rather than stand for photographs?
- Do ask whether your couple would prefer to remain private or whether you may post their images online.¹⁸

¹⁴ There is no such thing as a one size fits all and like we often say in our industry, we are all unique and this is the same for our knowledge, opinions, and experiences and the language we choose to use. No one group is a monolith.

¹⁵ The acronym LGBTQ+ is vast yet many industries see the acronym and assume only same sex/gay couples. Even where a couple appear to be same sex/gay, they may not be, they might be bisexual/pansexual/queer etc. If you see and/or hold yourself out as 'LGBTQ+ friendly or inclusive', it's imperative that you understand that the acronym covers a plethora of identities.

¹⁶ Examples: disabled person, person with a disability, no identity label.

¹⁷ We are happy for you to share our suggested alternatives, but these must be taken out of the report and put into your own words.

¹⁸ Many couples in marginalised groups face hate crime by putting themselves online or they just simply prefer discretion and privacy. Some are vulnerable to hate crime or trolling by simply being visible, so being respectful of privacy is key.

- Do ask if there are any hashtags and/or terms that your couple prefer you did not use if you plan to post about their wedding on social media and/or blog about their wedding.

Gender, Sex, and Sexual Orientation

Without getting too detailed, it is important to make a basic distinction between gender, sex, and sexual orientation (although there may be overlap):

Gender – predominantly based on social or cultural expectations. Some cultures have recognised more than the two binary genders of male and female for centuries, and some indigenous cultures all over the world have long traditions of doing so.¹⁹ The UK (largely) continues to struggle to see past the two binary genders of male and female, tied to a baby’s sex assigned at birth. Gender can be further understood by considering the difference between:

Gender Identity – Our own internal perception and experience of our gender which may or may not sit comfortably with the sex we were assigned at birth.

Gender Expression – How we express our gender to the world around us through clothing, mannerisms, makeup, and so on.

Sex – predominantly based on the “classification of biology”. In the UK, a baby is traditionally assigned either male or female at birth, however, intersex people don’t fit neatly into either of those classifications and can have atypical sex characteristics.

Sexual Orientation – relates to who we are physically, sexually, emotionally, and/or romantically attracted to.

¹⁹ Many of those cultures were lost because of Western colonisation.

Gender Identities

(Not a complete list)

Agender: A person who does not identify as having a particular gender.

Bigender: A person whose gender identity is a combination of man and woman or is sometimes a man and sometimes a woman.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex/gender assigned to them at birth.

Cis Woman: A person who identifies as a woman and was assigned female at birth.

Cis Man: A person who identifies as a man and was assigned male at birth.

Crossdresser: A person who wears clothes or make-up commonly associated with the 'opposite'²⁰ sex, but who do not necessarily identify as that gender.

Genderqueer: A person whose gender identity does not fit solely with being a man or a woman.

Gender Fluid: A person whose gender identity is not fixed.

Gender Nonconforming: A person whose behaviour or appearance does not conform to prevailing cultural and social expectations about what is deemed appropriate for their gender according to gender expectations or gender roles. One example could be a person who does not necessarily dress in the way that society expects them to, based on the sex/gender they were assigned at birth.

²⁰ Using the phrase 'opposite' sex suggests that there are only two sexes/genders. We have used it here to explain what we believe to be the common understanding of the term crossdresser i.e., we have used it for explanatory purposes only, hence the quotation marks. We would recommend not using it generally. Different sex or different gender is the better phrase to use. We recommend also, that you use caution when using the phrase 'same sex' unless you know for sure that the couple you are referring to have the same gender identity. We recommend not using this term to show that you are LGBTQ+ friendly because same sex couples are only one group under the LGBTQ+ umbrella.

Gender Questioning: A person exploring their gender identity.

Intersex: A person born with atypical sex characteristics that do not fit neatly into the classification of male or female. This may include variations in chromosomal, physical, gonadal, hormonal, or other attributes, and may include a combination, rearrangement, or variation of male or female classified features.

Non-binary: Sometimes used as an umbrella term to encompass gender identities that don't strictly align with being a man or a woman. Non-binary identities vary. Some people may reject binary identities altogether whereas some may identify with some aspects of binary identities. Some non-binary people may also identify as trans, some may not, although non-binary identities are typically accepted as falling under the trans umbrella as individuals whose gender identity is different to the sex they were assigned at birth.

Pangender: A person whose gender identity is not limited to one gender and who may feel like a member of all genders at the same time.

Transgender/Trans: A person whose gender identity is different to the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of many different terms which may include, agender, bi-gender, crossdresser, genderless, genderqueer, gender-fluid, gender-variant, non-binary, nongender, transsexual, trans man, or trans woman.

Trans Woman: A person assigned male at birth who identifies and lives as a woman. May also use MTF which is male-to-female abbreviated, or transsexual, both of which are terms that are generally used by the older generation.

Trans Man: A person assigned female at birth who identifies and lives as a man. May also use FTM which is female-to-male abbreviated, or transsexual, both of which are terms that are generally used by the older generation.

Transsexual: This term was used historically as a medical term (like homosexual) to refer to a person who transitioned to live in the 'opposite'²¹ sex to the one they were assigned at birth.

²¹ We have used the phrase 'opposite' sex here to explain what we believe to be the common understanding of the term Transsexual, i.e., we have used it for explanatory purposes only, hence the

This term is still used by some of the older generation of trans people. The terms trans or transgender are much more commonly used, certainly by the younger generations. This term also suggests that a person has transitioned and not all trans people choose to transition or have medical intervention at all. Unless directed to use this term by a person, about their own gender identity, we recommend using the terms trans or transgender.

Gender Segregation

Products

Shops, whether physical or online, tend to segregate their items by gender i.e., men's/women's clothing, girl's/boy's toys. We see a lot of bridesmaid gifts, groomsmen gifts, and so on in the wedding industry.

This not only excludes people who don't fit into either category, but it tells people what they should wear or what toys they should play with or what wedding gifts they should be buying based on gender.

It is limiting for everyone, and it could be career limiting for children who are not exposed to certain things that are more readily found in a different gender's shopping isle/category, like science or archaeology kits being for boys, for example.

Segregating by gender adds to feelings of being 'different' in a negative sense and can contribute to feelings of isolation if a person doesn't do/like/feel what society tells them to, based on the gender/sex they were assigned at birth.

We recommend using item specific categories instead such as, Wedding Party Gifts, Gifts for Children, Dresses, T-Shirts, Suits etc., which avoids limiting people based on gender.

quotation marks. We would recommend not using it. Different sex or different gender is the better phrase to use.

Services

A lot of services, specifically beauty/grooming services, are segregated by gender, e.g., women's waxing or men's waxing services or bridal makeup and bridal hair. Instead, how about having one list of waxing services and include descriptions like, all over body waxing, bikini waxing, chest waxing etc., so that no one person feels as though they are excluded, and the service is the focus point, not the gender of the person buying the service.

For hair, how about using wedding hair, or wedding barber services, or wedding hairdressing/hairstyling and then subcategorise using short hair/long hair/hair up. The key here is to focus on the service that is being offered, not the gender of the person you are offering it to.

Toilets

Large corporations (like the BBC) now have gender-neutral toilets.

We recommend that venues/shops/studios, where possible, have a gender-neutral toilet or a universal toilet or simply a toilet. There has been gender-neutral toilets for a long time, i.e., disabled toilets or simply just one toilet in an establishment due to space limitations. You may have also seen unisex toilets.

Gender-neutral toilets are proven to reduce waiting times for women, support trans inclusion, and are helpful to people with disabilities who have carers of a different gender. Introducing a gender-neutral toilet can be done as easily as putting up a new sign or removing a sign altogether and is one of the most important safety needs for transgender people. It is also possible to have gender-neutral toilets alongside gendered toilets.

Gender-neutral toilets have been successful where they've been introduced and have benefitted everyone.

General Accessibility Considerations

To be an inclusive service provider, we recommend being proactive in terms of the potential accessibility requirements that future couples/clients may have – this also ensures that you can genuinely say you don't need to ask here. This may include familiarising yourself with the accessibility of the venues/transportation/and service providers that you work with, as well as your own, and making recommendations along the way.

Please see below for several useful proactive considerations.

(Not a complete list)

Physical Disabilities

- Does the venue you own/work with have accessible toilets/washrooms, or provide an area with changing tables, should a person need to be transferred to the toilet?
- Do you have a working relationship with/can you recommend a wedding outfit alteration service, or a service provider who is skilled and experienced in adaptive formal wear?
- Have you considered how you might plan for altered timelines or scheduling to accommodate for fatigue?
- Does the venue you own/work with have step free access, especially in pertinent places such as at the alter?
- Do you/the florist you work with have experience with creating lighter bouquets?
- Have all dietary and food related accessibility requirements been requested from your couple/their guests and provided to the kitchen? I.e., some guests may have food intolerances, allergies, or may not be able to swallow food/may require the kitchen to cut up their food/prepare it in a specific way.
- Have wheelchair users been considered during the table setting and styling, i.e., chairs should be removed ahead of the event, and not when guests are arriving/about to eat.

Blind/Low-Vision

- Do you provide/can you recommend Braille options for menus and invitations?

- Do you provide/can you recommend service providers of audio cues for the couple/their guests?
- Is your venue/the venue you are working with friendly and accessible to service animals?
- Have you briefed venue staff/wedding party to ensure that blind guests are guided appropriately?

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- Does your venue/the venue you are working with have [ASL interpreters](#), [BSL interpreters](#), or interpreters of sign language native to your country?²²
- Have you asked your couples for their/their guests' music preferences?
- Does your videography service offer closed captioning for wedding videos? Can you recommend a videography service that offers closed captioning for wedding videos?
- Have you considered alternatives for clapping where required? I.e., waving hands is ASL for cheering.

Neurodivergent/Developmental Disabilities

- Have you considered the need for making sensory accommodations such as ensuring there is no strobe lighting, or checking the venue for textures, i.e., ensuring that you are creating an environment that is comfortable to the couple and their guests?
- Have you considered and planned for accommodating individual needs for [stimming](#), including but not limited to, organising private areas if private/quiet spaces are required?
- Where you provide a service that requires imparting detailed information or teaching of any kind, have you asked your couple/client about their learning style? Some people are tactile learners, visual learners, or auditory learners. It is crucial that you adapt the process to accommodate them, i.e., tactile learners may prefer lists or instructions to be written down. Visual learners might prefer being shown examples, and auditory learners may prefer talking things through and in-person meetings rather than email communication.

²² Edited by [Jo Barber](#).

Honorifics/Titles/Salutations

(Not a complete list)

Feminine

Miss – Typically used by girls, unmarried women and (in the UK) married women who continue to use their maiden name.

Mrs – Typically used by married women who do not have another professional or academic title.

Ms – Typically used by women, regardless of marital status or when marital status is unknown.

Some people who identify as women do not wish to be referred to or to use Miss and/or Mrs and feel that they are outdated terms tied to marital status and ‘belonging’ to a man. Note there is no similar honorific tied to marital status for a man. Typically, if this is a person’s preference, Ms would be preferred as it is not tied to a person’s marital status. As always, do not assume. Ask your couples what their preferred title is, or if they even want to use one at all, both before and after they are married.

Masculine

Master – Typically used by boys or young men.

Mr – Typically used by men, regardless of marital status, who do not have another professional or academic title.

Gender-Neutral

Mx – Typically used by those who do not wish to specify their gender or do not consider themselves a man or a woman.²³

²³ Pronounced the same as Ms but with a ‘ks’ sound on the end, ‘muks’. Please consider supporting the [Include Mx](#) campaign.

Misc (or Misk) – For those who do not wish to specify their gender or do not consider themselves a man or a woman or consider themselves as having a mix of genders or all genders at the same time.

Ind – Means individual. Mx can sometimes be confused as meaning ‘mixed’ and is also pronounced mix by some. Ind is completely gender neutral without room for confusion or misinterpretation.

Jargon, Idioms, and Acronyms

We sometimes get lost in our own industry bubble and assume that everyone knows what we are talking about. This is particularly dangerous in the wedding industry because our couples are as diverse as any industry can expect (or hope for). If they see lots of information that they cannot figure out quickly and easily, they may just move on to the next website. Jargon, idioms, and acronyms are also not accessible to some neurodivergent folk, or people who process writing literally.

Some individuals may not understand the meaning of wedding industry jargon²⁴, an idiom²⁵, or an acronym²⁶ and this may result in feelings of exclusion. Idioms may also not translate from one country to another and could even have positive connotations in one country and negative connotations in another.

If you choose to use any, we recommend explaining them in full alongside their use, in brackets perhaps, and adding gender-neutral alternatives to gendered ones, although we consider it more inclusive not to use them at all.

²⁴ Special words or expressions used by a profession or group that are difficult for others to understand.

²⁵ A group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (e.g., over the moon, see the light).

²⁶ An abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word.

Some examples are MUA²⁷, CF²⁸, G2B²⁹, B2B³⁰, FMI³¹, always the bridesmaid, never the bride, shotgun wedding, Mr Right, and match made in heaven.³²

Disability Terms

Able-Bodied – Originally used to reference someone without a disability. Though still widely used amongst the physically disabled community, it doesn't address other forms of disability well, and some members of the disability community oppose its use because it implies that all people with disabilities lack 'able bodies', or the ability to use their bodies well. They may prefer 'non-disabled' as being a more neutral term³³.

Ableism – A set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with disabilities. It rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be 'fixed' in one form or the other, and on the notion that ability equals value or worth.

Ableism is intertwined in and is a pervasive part of our culture, perpetuated by harmful beliefs and misconceptions about disability, upheld by the way non-disabled people learn to treat disabled people, and by excluding people with disabilities from key decisions and narratives.³⁴

Accessibility – Refers to the degree to which the environment, products, and services are accessible to people with disabilities.

Disability/Disabled – The term 'disability' covers a broad range and degree of conditions. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time³⁵. Disabilities can be visible, physical, cognitive, invisible, and more.

²⁷ Makeup Artist – unless you're in fashion or the wedding industry, it is unlikely that you will know what this means.

²⁸ Child Free – Same as above.

²⁹ Groom to be – Same as above and gender specific.

³⁰ Bride to be – Same as above and gender specific.

³¹ Future Mother-in-law – Same as above and gender specific.

³² If you choose to use idioms like these examples, a short explanation will make them more accessible.

³³ Source: <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/-ablebodied>

³⁴ Source: <https://www.cdrnys.org/blog/uncategorized/ableism/>

³⁵ Source: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability>.

Inspiration Porn – An informal term coined by the late Australian comedian, journalist, and disability activist Stella Young³⁶, for a loose genre of media depictions of disabled people, to cover a wide array of media portrayals and uses of disability that share one or more of the following qualities:

- Sentimentality and/or pity.
- An uplifting moral message, primarily aimed at non-disabled viewers.
- Disabled people anonymously objectified, even when they are named.³⁷

Interabled – A couple where one person is disabled and the other is non-disabled. Some couples choose to refer to themselves as interabled, others do not. We recommend not using this term unless a couple use it for themselves.

Non-Disabled – The current and broadly accepted most neutral term to describe people who do not have a disability. This term was coined by disabled people to focus the narrative on a disability perspective. Many organisations have adopted this language to give disability a better platform.

Identity First vs Person First

Identity first example – A gay person/A disabled person/An autistic person.

Person first example – A person who is gay/ A person who is disabled/A person who is autistic.

Most industries are very afraid to use identity first language when this is in fact far more preferred by many disability justice groups. We recommend challenging any fear about using identify first language if/when it arises. It is also crucial that no individual is told how to identify.

Which to use depends heavily on the person you are referring to; their self-identification is key. Those who choose identity first language may

³⁶ Watch Stella's TED Talk – [I am not your inspiration, thank you very much.](#)

³⁷ Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulang/2019/11/29/how-to-avoid-inspiration-porn/?sh=dd72edb5b3db>.

believe their orientation, disability, or identity should be affirmed. They may feel that valuing the person first implies that their identity isn't as valuable as a non-identified person, whereas those who choose person first language may believe that the value of them as a person is separate from their orientation, disability, or identity.

Self-identification should be respected and always prioritised, regardless of the consensus of any community. One gay person may choose identity first language for themselves but cannot and should not impose that on other gay people.

There should be very few situations in our industry where you need to refer to a person in any other way than by name. If a situation arises where you do need refer to a person in this way (perhaps when organising specific accessibility requirements or sending out a casting call for a styled shoot, for example), always mirror the way the person refers to themselves i.e., check their social media if you have it, or model profile etc. Failing that, politely ask.

Pronouns

(Not a complete list)

Masculine

He | Him | His – Typically used by a person who identifies as a man.

Feminine

She | Her | Hers – Typically used by a person who identifies as a woman.

Gender-Neutral

They | Them | Theirs – Typically used by a person who identifies as non-binary.

Ze (pronounced with a long 'e') | Zir | Zis | Zieself – Typically used by a person who identifies as non-binary.

Pronoun Pairs

She/They | He/They – Those who use pronoun pairs may do so for a variety of nuanced reasons. For some who use she/they, they may identify as a woman and non-binary, with their womanhood not being the full story of their gender, some may prefer gender-neutral pronouns but choose not to invest the energy and emotional labour into correcting people, and so accept the binary pronoun they're most likely to be referred to automatically, and some may prefer folk to use them interchangeably. As always, it will depend on the individual. If in doubt, ask.

This is a very brief introduction to pronouns and there are many more personal pronouns in use. We purposely use the word 'typically' because pronouns are not always indicative of a person's gender and so as a rule, it's safer not to assume a person's gender based on the pronouns they use.

The key is to ask a person what pronouns they use rather than trying to learn them all. This can be done in your forms on your website, or if in person, can be as natural and easy as, 'Hello, I'm Ava and I use she/they pronouns. What pronouns do you use?'. And if (when) you make a mistake, just correct it casually, 'sorry, I meant they', rather than bringing a lot of attention to it as too much focus on the mistake could make the person (and you) feel uncomfortable.

It may take a bit of practice using personal pronouns that you have not used or pronounced before, so rather than practising on your couples on their wedding day, why don't you allocate some new pronouns to your pets/teddy bears and practice in the comfort of your own home. This is especially useful if you are to speak at a wedding and have been informed of certain pronouns that you have not yet used. We are re-training our brains after hundreds and hundreds of years of defaulting only to she and he, so please be kind (and patient) with yourself.

We recommend including your own pronouns in your email signature/about section of your website, and on your social media bios.³⁸ This helps couples, and colleagues know exactly how you'd like to be

³⁸ Instagram has recently added a pronouns section to the profile settings in some countries. You may be required to update your app for this to appear as an option. If this option is not available after an update/in your country, you can still manually add your pronouns to the name or bio section of your account.

addressed (great for gender-neutral names too) and it shows couples how inclusive and knowledgeable you are. Using pronouns in our email signatures sends a very important message and shows couples that they are in a safe and inclusive space. It also raises important questions for those who are not yet familiar with personal pronouns beyond he and she and will provide you with an opportunity to spread awareness.

And whilst we're on the topic of email signatures, we recommend adding phonetic spelling/pronunciation of your name, to yours, and asking your couples how to pronounce theirs at the outset of your working relationship.

Sexual Orientation Terms

(Not a complete list)

Asexual or Ace – A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships. This does not mean however that all asexual people do not have sexual relationships. Some may have sex for other reasons e.g., for their partner, and some may have emotional and/or romantic connections with people without having a sexual relationship. You may therefore be involved in a wedding for a couple or one part thereof who identify as asexual.

Bisexual or Bi – A person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to two or more genders.

Gay – A person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. More commonly used by men who are attracted to men but can and is also used by women who are attracted to women.

Heterosexual or Straight – A person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the 'opposite'³⁹ gender.

Lesbian – A woman or non-binary person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to women.

³⁹ The word 'opposite' has been used for explanatory purposes only.

Pansexual or Pan – A person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to all gender identities/expressions. The difference between being pansexual or bisexual isn't always clear and will depend on a person's understanding of their own sexual orientation. Some people use both pan and bi.

Queer – An umbrella term to describe a person who does not identify as heterosexual/straight and/or cisgender. Please note that due to historical use of this term as a derogatory slur, not everyone has re-claimed and embraced it. We recommend only using it when a person identifies as queer and to be sensitive to the fact that to some, it may cause offence.

Questioning – A person who is, or a time in their life when, they are unsure about or exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Word/Phrase Swaps

(Not a complete list)

Wedding Industry Specific

Avoid – 'every Bride's must have', 'calling all brides'.

Alternative(s) – 'every person's/nearlywed's/couples' must have', 'calling all nearlyweds/newly engaged couples'.

Some businesses target only brides. Some weddings do not have a bride at all. Using language that speaks only to brides can cause a variety of problems:

- Some people might feel more comfortable with clothing/items traditionally associated with being a bride, while not necessarily identifying as a woman or wanting to use that specific term.
- It excludes weddings where both people identify as men or otherwise.
- It is a barrier to those who do not adopt the term bride.
- It feeds into the negative stereotype that in heterosexual relationships, the groom will leave all the wedding planning to the bride.
- Anyone not represented visually, or in the language, will automatically feel excluded and may begin to self-exclude over time.

By appealing to everyone and focussing on what you are offering rather than who you are offering it to, you are going some way to tackling this stereotype, as well as to ensuring that everyone feels included. If the wedding industry is predominantly speaking both by way of language and imagery to brides/women, then everyone else will inevitably feel excluded, including grooms in heterosexual relationships. By tweaking your language slightly, you are still attracting those you intend to attract without excluding others.

The same could apply to those businesses who call themselves a Bridal Boutique. This business is speaking only to brides. A more gender-neutral name could be, Wedding Dress Boutique. This will still attract your target market of women/brides and at the same time, will not actively exclude others who are interested in looking for a boutique wedding dress.

Avoid – The Bride and Groom (in a general sense i.e., throughout your website/marketing copy).

Alternative(s) – Brides and grooms, couples, newlyweds, the happy couple, engaged couples.

Not everyone will be a bride and/or a groom and there may be situations where neither term is relevant. For generic website copy therefore, it makes more sense to use 'couples' throughout, however, if you're keen to continue using bride and groom, make it plural rather than singular to avoid assuming all weddings feature one bride and one groom, and add on couples too, so as not to exclude those who do not wish to use bride and/or groom titles.

Further alternatives for bride and groom:

Bridegroom – Traditionally defined as a man to be married, bridegroom can be redefined for genderqueer, gender non-conforming, gender-fluid, and non-binary people.

Broom – A combination of bride and groom.

Gride – A combination of groom and bride.

Nearlywed – A person engaged to be married. This is a great alternative for Fiancé (a man who is engaged to be married) and

Fiancée (a woman who is engaged to be married), especially for individuals who do not identify as either a man or a woman.

Partner A and Partner B – 1 and 2 may suggest an inequality in the relationship. This is great for contracts/booking forms and for some heterosexual couples who prefer the word 'partner' as it demonstrates equality in every way.

Spouse to be – As an alternative for bride to be or groom to be.

Own Names – Some couples may prefer to simply be referred to using their own names and would feel more comfortable not using a wedding title at all.

Avoid – Bridal Suite/Bridal Party.

Alternative(s) – Honeymoon Suite, Newlywed Suite, Just Married Suite/Wedding Party.

There may not be a bride at all. If you're reluctant to let go of bridal party, perhaps consider saying bridal and/or wedding party and adding terms rather than swapping entirely.

Avoid – Bridesmaids and groomsmen (in general website copy, and on their own).

Alternative(s) – Wedding party or see further inspiration below.

If you'd still like to talk in general terms about traditional wedding party roles, consider adding wedding party as a third category to cover all possibilities or include a whole host of alternatives, together with traditional roles:

Bridesman, Bridesmen, Bridesfriend(s), Bridesmate, Man of Honour, They of Honour, Friend of Honour, Mate of Honour, Made of Honour, Groomsfriend(s), Groomsmate, Groomsmaid⁴⁰, Groomswoman, Groomswomen, They Team, Best Woman, Best Friend, Broom Crew, I Do Crew, I Do Few, We Do Few, We Do Crew, Bridesfolk, Groomsfolk.

Avoid – Bridal bouquet and groom's boutonniere.

Alternative(s) – One bouquet and one boutonniere or two of each.

⁴⁰ Contributed by www.photographybygrace.co.uk.

Adding the terms bridal and groom's makes both items gender specific. It also assumes that all weddings feature one bride and one groom as the default. The alternative provides for everyone and does not make any item of floristry gender specific. Why not also consider including a flower garland/sash? We'd love to see these become more readily available as an alternative to bouquets (but we obviously love bouquets too!).

Avoid – Bridezilla.

Alternative(s) – None 😊.

Being an equality-minded wedding supplier is being aware that we have different abilities and stress points. Uncharacteristic behaviour associated with the term 'bridezilla' can often be the result of heightened anxiety, stress, or pressure. It is also worth considering some of your couples may well have experience of mental ill health and being mindful of that in your language and in your approach to the services you offer and the judgements you make, may create a more inclusive environment, and improve customer service.

Other

Avoid – Ableist language (a word or phrase that devalues disabled people). Examples: mad, bonkers, crazy, dumb, nuts, r*tarded⁴¹, c*ipple⁴², differently abled⁴³, handicapable, handicap(ed), wheelchair bound, suffering from, special needs, gimp, m*dget⁴⁴, mentally handicapped, dysfunctional, stupid, inspirational⁴⁵, 'falling on deaf ears',

⁴¹ To type out the word r*tarded/the r word, without censoring the word in some way, is very ableist and harmful. Note from Ky: The first draft of this Guide included the r word without such censorship because of not consulting with a disability consultant from the outset. I sincerely apologise for this error in judgement and any harm it may have caused. Thank you to Jessica Oddi for holding me to account in this regard.

⁴² Unless this has been reappropriated/reclaimed by the individual and they self-identify in this way. If in doubt, always ask.

⁴³ Unless this has been reappropriated/reclaimed by the individual and they self-identify in this way. If in doubt, always ask.

⁴⁴ Unless this has been reappropriated/reclaimed by the individual and they self-identify in this way. If in doubt, always ask.

⁴⁵ Unless they like to be inspirational; no one should be inspiration porn for you/your business.

‘are you blind/deaf?’, ‘are you listening to me?’, or ‘I’d give an arm and a leg...’.

Alternative(s) – Awesome, intense, sensational, or wild instead of crazy or nuts. Frustrating, irritating, or annoying, instead of stupid or r*tarded. Disabled, wheelchair user, person with Dwarfism⁴⁶ etc.

Many of these words are so engrained into society that you may not realise they are linked or otherwise associated with disability and so it is likely to take some time and dedication to retrain ourselves with certain words. You may have also seen negative reactions to this topic suggesting that the world is becoming too politically correct. It is our view that this has nothing to do with political correctness and more about helping to remove stigma and being aware of the potential impact of our language on others, especially if we are claiming to be an inclusive business.

Avoid – Boys and girls.

Alternative(s) – Children, everyone, all.

There are many other alternatives too. If you were coaching a group of children in a sport for example, you could say, ‘hello players’, or ‘hello athletes’, if you’re entertaining children with magic at a wedding, you could say, ‘hello magicians’ etc.

Avoid – Guys (when referring to a mixed group of people).

Alternative(s) – Folks, people, team, everyone.

This term is not gender neutral and even if we do not intend it to, it assumes the default human is a man. This term is likely to be the hardest to stop using and it is used everywhere, stick with it!

Avoid – Homosexual.

Alternative(s) – Gay, lesbian, bisexual, or the term by which a person asks to be referred.

The term homosexual was historically used by the medical profession to describe attraction between two people with the same gender. This term

⁴⁶ Please see Cathy’s (@thatsinglemum) [Instagram highlight titled the M Word](#) for background about why this slur is so harmful. Please also consider supporting Cathy’s [Patreon](#) and if you’re into skincare, she’s got you covered – pun entirely intended!

is considered outdated and offensive to some and so it should be avoided unless your couples choose to identify in this way.

Avoid – Ladies and gentlemen/ladies and gents/sir(s)/madam.

Alternative(s) – Folks, everyone, all, esteemed guests, wedding guests, or simply hello.

This is another one that will be hard to kick but it assumes only two genders and there may well be non-binary people in the room you are addressing or within the people you are greeting.

For sir/madam, you may unknowingly greet a person who appears either/or but identifies differently. This greeting may cause them some internalised pain and discomfort. You could also find yourself in a situation where a person's gender expression doesn't fit with either/or and you may be unsure, and on the spot, causing embarrassment for you both. Opting for gender-neutral forms of address as the default position avoids potential upset or awkwardness and spares folk from pain (for you, it might happen once, for them, it's probably happened hundreds of times).

Avoid – Minorities (when referring to LGBTQ+ people, Black, Indigenous, people of colour, disabled, or any other marginalised/underrepresented group(s)).

Alternative(s) – Marginalised group(s), under-represented group(s), people with under-represented racial identities.

Whilst some people within a marginalised/under-represented group won't mind being referred to as a 'minority', the term can infer being 'less than' and inherently suggests that being cisgender, heterosexual, non-disabled, and/or white is the default. Where it's relevant to refer to a particular group, mirror the language used by the group you are referring to, and where this is not clear, we recommend using marginalised/under-represented group(s), or referring to people by their name.

Avoid – Coloured and half caste.

Alternative(s) – Black, Indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC/POC*), Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME*), mixed race, mixed heritage.

*(use with caution – see below).

The acronyms BIPOC/POC are more often used in America to describe a person who is not white. It is important to note that not everyone wishes to be referred to in this way. Comparatively, the acronym BAME is typically used in the UK to describe a person who is not white and similarly, some people are not comfortable being referred to as BAME.

If it is appropriate to describe a person or groups' race or ethnicity, please be mindful of your language. Coloured and half caste are words derived from slavery once used to dehumanise Black people. These words are still used by some today. These words are extremely offensive and should be always avoided.

Some people may prefer to be referred to and may refer to themselves as Black, Asian, or a different racial identity. People will have their own preference. Where possible and where relevant, mirror the language that the couple use to identify their ethnicity or heritage, e.g., British-Nigerian couple, multi-cultural couple, inter-racial couple. If it's not necessary to describe a person's race or ethnicity, then don't.

It may seem complicated as language is constantly evolving and very personal/subjective, however, it is essential to prioritise self-identification to be inclusive and respectful.

Avoid – Mum and Dad/Mother of the/Father of the.

Alternative(s) – Parent(s), relative(s) (if you need to ask this question at all).

We mustn't assume that every family has one mum and one dad or any parents at all. Some couples may have two mums, or two dads, they may have lost a parent or both, they may not be in contact with their parent(s), potentially because of their marriage/gender identity/orientation, they may have grown up via a care system, or with foster parents, or they might be adopted.

Families come in all shapes and sizes. It is much better to ask about a wedding party, or guest roles/titles, and then take the lead from your couple. Please also try to avoid, where your couple or one part thereof have been adopted or come from blended families, the phrases, 'your real dad' or 'your real sister'. What is 'real' to some may not be real to others.

It's also worth noting that some LGBTQ+ people have a chosen family.

Avoid – Sexual Preference.

Alternative(s) – Sexual Orientation.

Many people do not consider their sexual orientation a choice and so the word 'preference' is not in-keeping with this and should be avoided unless your couple use this phrase themselves.

Avoid – Opposite Sex.

Alternative(s) – Different Sex.

Opposite sex suggests that there are only two sexes/genders.

Avoid – Girlfriend(s), Boyfriend(s), Wife/Wives, Husband(s) (when asking for further details about the couple getting married and/or any of their guests/wedding party).

Alternative(s) – Spouse(s), Partner(s).

By using the alternatives, you are not assuming anything about the partner of a person, and you are not creating an uncomfortable situation where your couple feels that they must 'come out' to you in the booking process. Remember, you're a #YouDontNeedToAskHere business so you need to work hard to show couples that you see them, you hear them without them having to check in and ask.

Styled shoots from a commercial perspective

Styled shoots are a form of marketing and an opportunity to showcase your talents. They are a time and monetary investment into your business and help you showcase your offering. They provide content for social media and websites, and they are an opportunity to network and build valuable connections in the industry, which may lead to business referrals, and even friendships.

The first observation we have from an inclusivity (and entrepreneurial) perspective is that some suppliers will sign up to a styled shoot without knowing anything about the agenda/message to be put forward by the organiser. From a business perspective, this is dangerous, because if you're named as a contributor, your reputation is at risk.

Our first recommendation is that before you say yes to a styled shoot, ask some questions and get curious, so that you can make an informed decision as to whether this styled shoot's agenda fits with your brand and core values.

Styled shoots from a disability perspective

The following considerations are imperative when attempting to showcase your inclusivity via styled shoots and/or when working with disabled models or wedding suppliers:

- Instruct a disability inclusivity consultant to guide you through the process (from the outset) and split the cost between the supplier team and include disabled suppliers/models in the shoot agenda/message.
- Avoid inspiration porn and perpetuating disability stereotypes at all costs.
- Remember that not all disabilities are visible wheelchair users.
- Ensure that you diversify your models and supplier teams and be respectful of/informed about intersectional identities, i.e., Black disabled people exist and are disproportionately underrepresented in the wedding industry and media in general.
- Strive to include and contribute to the representation of a range of disabilities, from physical/motor, to blind/deaf, neurodivergent, developmental, chronic illness, and invisible disabilities.
- Ask (verbally or via detailed and considered forms), for models/supplier team specific accessibility needs, i.e., do they require help with dressing, makeup, require adaptive clothing, etc.
- Ensure that you are equipped to accommodate the shoot/venue/service provision for the model/supplier team's accessibility needs and do not opt for models/supplier teams because they have fewer accessibility needs than others.
- Ensure that your shoot plan/schedule works for your disabled supplier team/models and avoid last minute shoots or changes that can be avoided as some disabled people need to plan or bring along assistants.

Styled shoots from an LGBTQ+ perspective

Our next observation relates specifically to same-sex or LGBTQ+ styled shoots. It is always preferred that models are a real-life couple due to

chemistry and authenticity, however, we appreciate that this is not always possible. Should that be the case, we recommend that models should be LGBTQ+ identifying and capable of being in/are in, the diverse relationships they're attempting to portray.

The reason for our belief is two-fold: (1) there are LGBTQ+ identifying models out there and with a little digging and determination, they can be found. True inclusivity requires a little effort and someone willing to lead by example. LGBTQ+ identifying models should be given the opportunity to represent themselves over their lived experiences being portrayed by heterosexual people who benefit generally from the opportunities that come from having straight privilege⁴⁷, and (2) if the sole purpose of the shoot is to be inclusive, then those diverse voices that you are attempting to represent need to be part of the agenda.

It is very apparent to some LGBTQ+ couples when a styled shoot has been planned and executed by people, and featuring people, who do not have a shared lived experience. If a couple sees this lack of authenticity, it may have the opposite impact on them than that which the organiser intended. It may even leave some feeling like the organiser is capitalising on marginalised identities for profit, without getting to the crux of what real inclusivity is, i.e., elevating the right voices and providing opportunities to marginalised groups. We don't want to see good intentions back-fire as that doesn't help anyone.

It is important to note here that you are not 'wrong' or a bad person if you have already carried out a shoot in the way we suggest the industry should avoid. It's about what you choose to do in the future, equipped with this new information. It's about being open to new viewpoints, rather than being criticised or judged for past ones. We don't grow when we feel under attack. It's very powerful to see some suppliers publicly acknowledge that they didn't see the issue but now commit to only using LGBTQ+ identifying models in the future and it's this that will contribute to a shift in understanding within the industry.

We therefore recommend that if you organise a same sex/LGBTQ+ styled shoot or you are asked to take part in one, that you consider the following:

⁴⁷ i.e., they do not have **the same** hurdles and challenges to overcome when it comes to finding work opportunities.

- Instructing an inclusivity consultant to guide you through the process (from the outset) and split the cost between the supplier team.
- Be clear on your agenda/message from the outset – is it about the couple’s love primarily, or the styling?
- Consider whether you need to talk about the fact that the couple are the same sex or LGBTQ+ or not:
 - It’s much better not to talk about it unless you’re making a specific statement about positive representation/relating it to accessibility or shedding some light on difficulties that certain people are having in accessing a service. By including diverse models without pointing out their identities, you’re being inclusive in a natural way. Those you’re seeking to attract will see people like them without a narrative. This is positive representation. Sometimes, less is more!
- Consider what voices should form part of your supplier team.
- Ask your LGBTQ+ models to contribute, ‘if it was your wedding, what would you include?’. Alternatively, you might make a concerted effort to ensure that LGBTQ+ identifying suppliers are on the supplier team. Don’t allow cis-hetero people (even if that’s you) to decide what an LGBTQ+ wedding should look like; empower your models or those with lived experience of LGBTQ+ relationships to contribute to the narrative/visual. This will save you from falling into the trap of negative stereotyping which could cause you more harm than good. NB it is very rare that a supplier will be provided with unsolicited feedback from people visiting their website or seeing their shoot, so their business could be taking a hit that they’re oblivious to. Don’t let that be you. Your hard work is very valuable.
- Ask yourself whether you really need that rainbow or whether one bride should be in a suit and the other in a dress – this shouldn’t happen if you’re following our advice above.
- Think carefully about your casting calls and make sure you understand the Equality Act 2010 insofar as it applies to you (outside the scope of this Guide). Open the opportunity up to everyone and add in, ‘we are particularly interested in hearing from [insert underrepresented groups that you’d like to inform your shoot]’ – Make sure that you’re informing potential models of the aim of the shoot and ensure that they are comfortable with the message you intend to deliver.
- Do not ‘out’ your models or any LGBTQ+ suppliers. Just because they’ve responded to the casting call or shoot supplier invitation

and shared their identity with you, does not mean it's ok for you to share this wider. Focus on the work and the contribution of everyone involved and leave the sharing of identities to each person as they see fit. It's your duty to provide an inclusive experience on the day, as much as it is your duty to ensure that your inclusive message afterwards is a positive one.

- Don't just do one shoot – make sure that your business is consistently inclusive visually, in its language, and in the way it deals with people day to day: couples and colleagues alike. Consistency is key.
- And pose...

Styled shoots from a race and ethnicity perspective

It is no secret that Black, Asian, and other ethnic groups are under-represented in the wedding industry. For wedding parties from under-represented groups, it can be incredibly difficult to find suppliers or services within the industry that understand, and therefore can cater to, their ethnic and cultural needs. There is a real need for more diversity within styled shoots, however, this must be done authentically, should not be tokenistic, and should avoid racial stereotyping.

Tokenism is the practice of making only a minimal, performative, or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, to appear to be supporting or inclusive of people from under-represented groups. Racial stereotypes are exaggerated mental views that people hold about all members of a particular racial group. These mental views are so rigid that people tend to ignore or discard any information that is not consistent with the stereotype that they have developed about that racial group.

When formulating, planning, and styling a shoot, consideration should be given to some key basic components that will make a shoot more racially inclusive for the supplier team, the models, and the end-user - couples; these are hair, make-up, photography, colourism, tokenism/stereotyping, and the difference between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation.

Hair

Hair is an important part of Black culture and identity, and it comes in a diverse range of textures. It can be a complicated and political topic, as natural and more tightly curled afro hair is often discriminated against and portrayed as untamed and less aesthetically appealing. When choosing models for styled shoots, it is important to consider versatility of afro hair types and consequently book diverse hair stylists with the appropriate experience and knowledge for authentic representation.

Make-up

Diverse make-up artists with appropriate experience and knowledge of working with darker skin tones and which products work with different skin tones are key to an inclusive shoot. Often, Black models are not provided with products that are suitable for their skin tones and find themselves having to bring their own make-up to shoots, therefore creating an environment where they are excluded, which also results in a shoot where Black models do not appear as aesthetically 'polished' as white models or models with lighter skin tones.

Photography

There is an element of racial bias in photography that must be recognised and addressed. Darker skin tones photograph differently against colours and lighting. Focusing on lighter skin tones as the norm creates a visible imbalance within the final image. It is crucial that research into a photographer's previous work and experience is carried out, to ensure that they have the appropriate experience and knowledge of capturing darker skin tones effectively.

Colourism

Colourism is a prejudice based on skin tone, typically amongst people of the same ethnic or racial group, whereby the lighter skin tone that a person has, the more they are accepted and reflected within society. Colourism is rooted in slavery, reinforced by colonialism and has been perpetuated both within ethnic communities and mainstream society. Be mindful of only including ethnically diverse models that have some form of proximity to whiteness.

Tokenism and stereotyping

Tokenism and stereotyping should be explored carefully and sensitively when creating a shoot based on a specific racial or cultural element. It is imperative to speak with and include people from that group/community to get a good understanding of what is and is not acceptable for true authenticity to avoid any aspect of cultural appropriation, tokenism, or perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Cultural Appropriation vs Cultural Appreciation

Appreciation is when someone seeks to understand and learn about another culture to broaden their perspective and connect with others cross-culturally. **Appropriation** on the other hand, is simply taking one aspect of a **culture** that is not your own and using it for your own personal interest with little or no cultural sensitivity.

It is vital that models/suppliers on the styled shoot team do not feel excluded/tokenised in shoots by having professionals that have little or no experience of how to correctly capture flattering elements of them/or represent their love authentically. To be truly representative then it is vital to be intentional and diversify your team in all areas from hair, make-up, lighting, photography, narrative, language and so on.

Where culturally significant props/clothing etc., are to be purchased for a shoot, for it to be appreciation and not appropriation, those products should be purchased from within that culture and not from a mass producer with no ties to the culture; to purchase from the latter is to appropriate⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ Source: <https://nubride.com/2019/05/07/how-to-avoid-cultural-appropriation-at-weddings/>.

Colour and Typography

We recommend the following:

- Using larger fonts for text.
- Scaling headings accordingly so there's a distinction between hierarchies.
- Avoid italics or uppercase text.
- Left aligning text and not using a combination of alignments.
- Avoid using decorative or over stylized typefaces (unless they are graphic art).
- Avoid intensely bright colours.
- Checking the contrast between text and its background so that it can be read by people with moderately low vision (who do not use contrast-enhancing assistive technology) using the [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#) tool. Contrast that is too high can cause eye and head strain.

Website Design Resources

The UK government has produced an informative blog post entitled, '[Do's and don'ts on designing for accessibility](#),' by Karwai Pun, who is part of an accessibility group at Home Office Digital. Together with her team, she's created six dos and don'ts posters as a way of approaching accessibility from a design perspective, which specifies different user groups including autistic, screen readers, blind/low vision, physical disabilities, deaf/hard of hearing, and dyslexia.

We also recommend that your website follows the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines which can be achieved by hiring a web designer who specializes in accessible design, or by consulting the [Guide to WCAG](#) created by Jessica Oddi and Kai Prince which is a simple step-by-step guide.

Social Media Accessibility: Alt Text

Alt text is embedded in the code of an image. We recommend keeping it very short, around one or two sentences that explain the visual. Be sure to accurately copy any text written on the image or the post.

On Instagram, Alt Text options can be found while making a post, under Advanced Settings > Accessibility > Write Alt Text. For other social platforms, simply search ‘how to add alt text...’.

Social Media Accessibility: Image Descriptions

Image descriptions are more detailed than alt text and go in the caption of your post. They provide additional context to visuals like images, videos, and GIFs. They’re valuable as a back-up in case someone’s assistive device doesn’t read out alt text, or for those who process easier by reading rather than visualizing. [Image Descriptions with Baby Jess](#), by Jessica Oddi is a useful resource to help you write them.

Social Media Accessibility: Closed Captioning/Transcripts

We recommend that all video/audio content contains closed captioning. Captions are more than subtitles and provide context for audio elements, including sounds and added audio descriptions of the setting.

On platforms where you can’t use closed captions (e.g., Instagram stories), we recommend using open captions embedded directly in the video. Where applicable, try to ensure that video/audio content also provides a written transcript of the recording (transcripts are documents that outline all the content of a video/audio). An example can be found in the [“Is It Accessible?” presentation](#) by Jessica Oddi. [Describe](#) is a great tool for creating captions and transcripts.

Social Media Accessibility: Post Captions/Hashtags

Always strive to be concise with your words. We recommend using apps like the [Hemingway Editor](#) to check the reading level of text. This helps to avoid using too many idioms or passive text. Where you do use idioms, or where sarcasm/other emotional tones are portrayed in your

captions, we recommend adding a note to them for context and so they're universally accessible, for example:

- I absolutely love doing my taxes! /sarcasm; and
- I'm definitely NOT nervous about it /jk (or /joking).

We recommend limiting the number of emojis used together as screen readers will read out each one and it becomes a nuisance.

We recommend using camel case for hashtags, i.e., capitalizing the first letter of each word. This means that screen readers will read each word separately instead of the whole hashtag as one long incoherent word. Camel case also makes it easier to read in general. Example:

- Accessible: #HashtagExample; and
- Not accessible: #hashtagexample.

Conclusion

Congratulations on your commitment to inclusivity; we're delighted that you've made it all the way to the conclusion. Inclusivity is something that must come from within, at your own pace, and in your own time. It's urgent, of course, however, true inclusivity must be authentic and voluntary and without shame. Shame is one of the biggest barriers to progression for all humanity.⁴⁹

To create equity, we all need to re-adjust and retrain ourselves after hundreds of years of harmful conditioning and we will make mistakes. It's a journey of continued self-reflection, interrogation, and adjustment, and sometimes it will make us feel fragile, and quite frankly terrible; sit with it, and move through it and know that you're not alone.

The result will be wholesome and validating for you, your business, your colleagues, and the couples you serve.

We hope you've learned a thing or two and we'd love to know what you think, perhaps by tagging the contributors in an Instagram post, if you'd like to shout about the Guide, or by reaching out to [The Career Queer directly](#) – you are also welcome to [buy them a virtual coffee](#) as a thank

⁴⁹ If you haven't heard of [Brené Brown](#), check her out; she's a shame, vulnerability, and courage researcher and educator and without insight into all of these, being inclusive is almost impossible!

you for their continued labour in making this Guide free for everyone, if you're feeling generous.

If there's anything at all in this Guide that has offended you, or caused you distress of any kind, please know that you can share this with us, and we will work to correct this with sensitivity and haste. Our work is collaborative, empathetic, a labour of love, and hopefully intersectional which means that we are forever learning too.

Thank you for supporting us and for striving to be a, you don't need to ask here, business!

We appreciate you.



A Guide to Inclusivity 2023

We are delighted to say that Ky and one other consultant - to be confirmed - will be creating a third iteration of this amazing Guide: A Guide to Inclusivity 2023.

To be kept up to date and get your next instalment, please make sure you're following [The Career Queer](#) on Instagram and why not bring your mates with you?