

A Guide to Designing Inclusive Educational Materials



TRAILS
SCOT Teaching Responsible
AI Literacy in Schools

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This document is a starting point for helping you design more inclusive educational materials, with links to useful online resources.



Inclusivity is about more than just being able to tick things off a checklist, and involves thinking about:

- **pedagogy** (e.g. teaching with movement-based or game-based activities to engage more learners),
- **different ways of learning** (e.g. providing ways to engage with the activity solo or in a group, visually or aurally),
- whether **the topics and voices featured in the content** are reflecting the full picture (e.g., when teaching about the British Empire, whose perspectives are being highlighted?)

This document focuses more on surface-level features like fonts and images used, because they are “low-hanging fruit” – easier to correct. These things are nevertheless important to get right. But once you’ve got them right, it doesn’t mean the job is done! It is still extremely important to think about the deeper features mentioned above. The end of this document will offer some pointers on how to get started with those.



Using diverse names

Representation matters. As anyone with an unusual name will know, it can feel othering when names like yours never come up in the example questions or stories in educational materials. This can feel even worse when in fact you're in a setting where "unusual" names are the norm, and yet only names from the historically dominant tradition appear in all your learning materials – it sends a message that people like you don't belong in that space. So use a diverse selection of names whenever you create example questions, stories, or characters.



The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi is a great book for discussing diverse names with Primary learners.

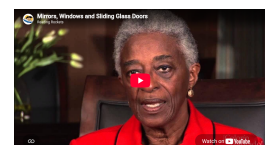
[Click to watch a readaloud video of the book](#)

Here are some websites to help you find diverse names:

- Diverse Names Generator: <https://diversenamesgenerator.com/>
- Random Name Generator: <https://www.behindthename.com/random/>
- Nameberry Multicultural Names:
<https://nameberry.com/userlist/view/62227>
- National Records of Scotland:
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/babies-first-names-2024/>
- Some links to other sites from University of Queensland:
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/diversityandinclusionforoer/chapter/example-names/>

What if I'm not in a culturally diverse setting?

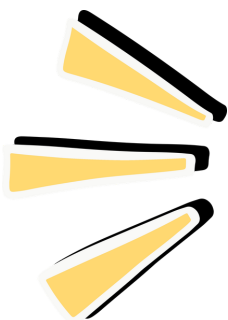
Educational materials should serve as both **mirrors** (children see themselves reflected) and **windows** (children are exposed to new and different cultures).



[Click to watch Prof Rudine Sims Bishop on "mirrors and windows"](#)

Images

The same goes for images as for names. When including example images of people in slides, worksheets, and other educational materials, ensure that they represent a diverse range of skin tones, hair colours, body types, and disabilities.



WATCH OUT FOR... AI-GENERATED IMAGES

AI-generated images, if you have not prompted them carefully, are by default likely to favour images of men over women, white people over people of colour, thin people over fat people, etc. **They will usually reproduce harmful stereotypes.** E.g., if you ask for an image of a doctor, it will generate a white man, and if you ask for a nurse, a white woman, both usually young, slim and conventionally attractive. There are a host of other issues with using AI-generated images, such as copyright infringement of scraped training data, environmental footprint of hardware, exploitative labour practices, and the political agendas of big tech companies.

How to find free, creative commons images to use in educational materials:

- **Unsplash** - free stock images: <https://unsplash.com>
- **Pixabay** - free stock images, videos, music, etc: <https://pixabay.com>
- **Canva** also has lots of free stock images, if you have an educator's license.
- When searching for images on **Google**, you can filter by usage rights. Click **Tools > Usage rights > Creative Commons licenses**
- **Wikipedia** - most images on wikipedia are creative commons licensed - it will specify under the photo.
- **Open Symbols** - free icons and illustrations: <https://www.opensymbols.org>
- **Noun project** - free icons: <https://thenounproject.com>
- **Better Images of AI** (this is good for avoiding stereotypical, anthropomorphic images of AI): <https://betterimagesofai.org>

Design and Layout

Designing with different support needs in mind.



Accessible Colour Palettes

- colorso.co is a fun tool for creating custom colour palettes. Click the glasses icon in the toolbar to check how your colour palette looks with different types of colour-blindness.
- davidmathlogic.com/colorblind is another tool that suggests accessible sets of contrasting colours.



Accessible Fonts

- Download the OpenDyslexic font: <https://opendyslexic.org>
- [Atkinson Hyperlegible Font](#) (the font used in this doc), for readers with low vision.



Visual Supports

- opensymbols.org: free icons and illustrations
- thenounproject.com: free icons
- Posters and recommended apps from [CALL Scotland](#)



Accessible Document Layout

- [Dyslexia Scotland Layout Guide](#)
- [British Dyslexia Association Style Guide](#)
- [Universal Design for Learning Guidelines](#) for online resource design
- [Free training modules](#) on creating accessible documents

Inclusive Language

Below are some guides to inclusive terminology around neurodiversity, disability, and race.

If in doubt, just ask someone which terms they prefer! It's never too late to learn something new and adjust your language accordingly. :)

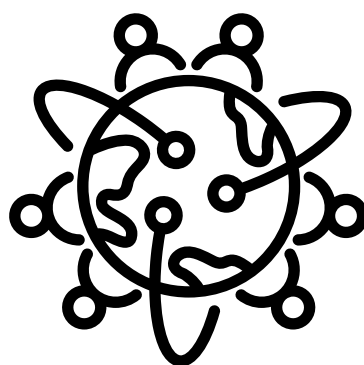


- Terminology around **neurodiversity**: <http://nhsdorset.nhs.uk/neurodiversity/about/language/>
- Terminology around **disability**: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability>
- The **social model of disability**: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/social-model-disability-language>
- Terminology around **gender**: <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>
- Terminology around **race**: <https://www.theantiracisteducator.com/glossary>

Content and Pedagogy

As mentioned at the start, the content you include (or leave out) as well as the teaching methods used can make a huge impact on how inclusive your educational materials are. The links below will help you to start thinking about inclusive pedagogy and curriculum.

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>
- Scotdec's **Anti-racist Toolkit for Educators:**
<https://scotdec.org.uk/resources/anti-racist-toolkit-for-teachers/>
- Resources signposted by the **Anti-racist Educator:**
<https://www.theantiracisteducator.com/recommendations>
- Understanding different cultures - the **Cultural Atlas:**
<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/countries>



Conclusion

This document was written and compiled by Jasmeen Kanwal with help from the rest of the Data Education in Schools Team. It is a working document which we will keep updating. If there is anything you think we should add or change, let us know!

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