

When formulating your job description, it is important to consider including language that would attract and engage a diverse pool of candidates. An inclusive job description creates an opportunity for a wide-range of people to imagine themselves in a role, which in turn may influence their decision to apply. Listed are some best practices that can make your job descriptions more inclusive. In addition, the HR team is available for consult and can provide you with support and additional recommendations, when needed.

## Tips for Writing Inclusive Job Descriptions

- **Use gender-neutral language:** Be mindful of your word choice throughout your job description. Some words or phrases are considered to be [more masculine](#) than others. Also, avoid using words like “he or she” instead use “**you,**” “**they,**” or “**the ideal candidate**” when describing job responsibilities.
  - We have prepared a list of a few commonly-used words in job descriptions that have been defined as masculine, and the gender-neutral alternatives you may want to consider to replace them. You may also find the free tool [Gender Decoder](#) to be a useful resource.
- **Prioritize and limit your requirements:** Consider only including necessary qualifications/competencies for the role. When it is not clear what differentiates between “required” and preferred” experience, skills or education, there may be [disparate impact](#) on certain groups. If there are certain *desired skills* you still think are worth mentioning in the job description, include language like “familiarity with,” or “basic knowledge of,” to clearly convey it is not a requirement. Also consider if the skill or knowledge can be easily learned on the job once the person fills the role, rather than requiring it as a competency required for the position.
- **Promote opportunity for growth:** When possible, emphasize that both candidates who have demonstrated the job requirements and those who may still be learning and growing are welcome to apply. Candidates evaluate themselves differently and may determine themselves as “unqualified” for the role if they don’t feel the knowledge they have acquired will be sufficient for the role.
- **Be thoughtful about specific requirements for past experience:** There has and continues to be underrepresentation of certain groups in higher-level positions, which continues to create barriers to entry for qualified female candidates—especially women of color. [Research shows](#) female representation drops steadily as you move from entry-level positions up to the C-suite. Consider the adverse impact that could result when requiring candidates to have a certain number of years in previous roles they may have never been given the opportunity to fill.
- **Describe the goal or outcome rather than the approach:** Best practice is to focus on the goal/outcome, rather than the method. Keep in mind that we are all unique and can apply a different approaches to achieve the desired outcome. Try not limiting candidates to a specific type of approach or method, if possible.
- **Re-evaluate language used to describe the candidate:** Using words such as “expert,” or “superior” can be intimidating to some candidates who may see themselves as team players, as opposed to other candidates who may be more competitive in nature and are less humble about their experience and/or accomplishments. It’s also important to consider what you really want in your ideal candidate. Are you really look for an “expert” or someone who can demonstrate and/or has had exposure to a certain skill set?
- **Be mindful of varying levels of literacy:** Ensure your job descriptions are easy to understand and appeals to a diverse audience. Writing complex descriptions that are difficult to understand may exclude people with different levels of literacy, as well as those who may have a learning disability that does not prevent them from carrying out the responsibilities of the job successfully.
- **Limit business jargon:** Incorporating jargon and acronyms that may not be familiar to a diverse candidate pool is discouraged. It can greatly diminish the number of candidates you may attract from other industries with transferable skills. Focus on writing a clear, concise description of the tasks and requirements for the role. If jargon is necessary to describe certain systems or software, please be sure to spell them out, rather than just including the acronym(s).
- **Avoid phrases that may appear ageist:** Phrases like “young and energetic,” “digital native” or “work hard, play hard,” can imply or overtly state that you’re seeking candidates of a certain age range.
- **Question your own bias:** Be conscious of what it is you’re looking for in a candidate and question if the requirements or “nice to have” skills sets may benefit certain people or groups more than others.