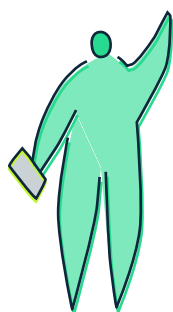


# Inclusive language matters

Creating health information everyone can use is about more than plain language. It is about making sure the language, tone and design you use is appropriate for your intended audience. You might consider:

- Cultural background
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Disability
- Age



Remember one size does not fit all! To reach diverse audiences we need to adapt.

## Top tips

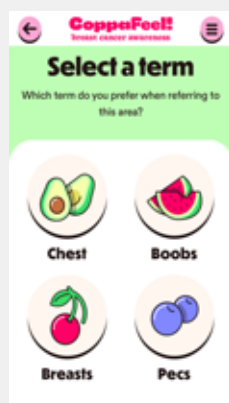
- Ask questions about the language you are using
- Produce information for and with a diverse audience
- Listen to user feedback
- If there are conflicting views, reflect them
- Be inclusive without reducing to stereotypes
- Be conscious of outdated terms
- Pair newer terms with more familiar terms
- Consider your audience's health literacy
- Explain when challenged and adjust when appropriate

## Case study: Letting the user choose their terms

CoppaFeel! gives users the option to choose the language most appropriate to them.

[self-checkout.coppafeel.org/onboarding-first-things-first](https://self-checkout.coppafeel.org/onboarding-first-things-first)

**CoppaFeel!**  
breast cancer awareness



## Involving users



Co-produce and test information with users to make sure it is inclusive and culturally appropriate.

### Person-first v disability-first language

- **Person-first** language is the medical model – 'a person with a disability'.
- **Disability-first** language is from the social model – 'I am a disabled person'.

User testing can help you identify the most appropriate model.

## Positive not negative

- ✓ 'people have'
- ✗ 'people suffer with'

Try to avoid phrases with negative connotations – 'going down a blind alley' 'tone deaf'

## Question everything

- Why are we using these words?
- What assumptions are we making?
- What images do we use?
- What colours?
- What tone and branding?

Produced by the Patient Information Forum.  
Published June 2022.  
Updated June 2024.  
Review date June 2026.

Trusted  
Information  
Creator



[pifonline.org.uk](https://pifonline.org.uk)