



## MODULES

1. Recognition

**2. Language**

3. Visibility

4. Documents

5. Spaces

6. Protection

7. Innovation

8. Intersectionality

9. Communications

Extra: Legal issues

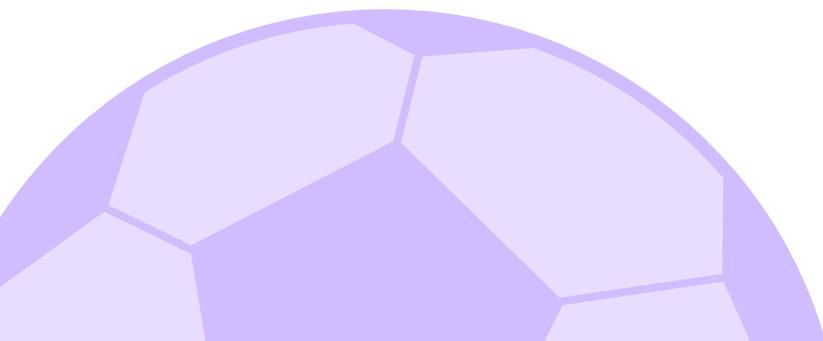
We make a binding commitment at our organization to use inclusive language that addresses all genders (each and every one) and does not promote gender stereotypes.

## What does language have to do with trans, intersex, and non-binary (TIN) participation in sports?

### 1. Language contains assumptions and shapes reality

*Ali is 16 and has been playing handball for 10 years. Ali is non-binary and uses “Ali” in place of a pronoun such as “he” or “she.” Nobody in the club knows this yet. This season, Ali has been invited to advance to a team with older players and is very excited to play. At the first practice session, the coach greets Ali and introduces Ali to the team. “This is Ali! He is new to the team!” Then the team immediately gets started with practice. “Men, let’s run some laps to warm up. Five for everybody, okay guys?” Ali does not feel comfortable correcting the coach in this situation.*

The coach is using the pronoun “he,” which is the wrong pronoun for Ali. He refers to the team as “men” and “guys,” which communicates his assumption that everyone on the team is a “man” or “guy,” including Ali. Because Ali is new to the team and younger than most of the other players, Ali does not feel comfortable coming out.





## Using language that encourages TIN people to participate

**Gender-inclusive language:** Studies have shown that when masculine forms (“first baseman,” “defensive lineman”) are used exclusively when making generic references, listeners are much more likely to picture men only in these roles. In addition, such forms do not address all genders equally; most are rendered invisible by this language. We recommend using gender-inclusive terms (“first base player,” “defensive end”), as they address all genders equally. In some cases, using gender-inclusive language may seem like cumbersome linguistic gymnastics at first, but for many TIN people, this change is an important step in helping them to feel recognized.

**Gender-inclusive language for groups:** Gender cannot be seen or heard from the outside. That is why we recommend addressing groups using gender-neutral language that does not assign a common gender to everyone in the group. Therefore, instead of referring to a group or team as “guys” or “girls,” for instance, use neutral identifiers such as “players,” “participants,” or “team” to include people of all genders.

**Using the correct pronouns:** If we want to refer to individual people in the group in the third person (for example: “He is really good!”), it can be helpful to regularly begin practice by holding a brief round of introductions. That way, each person can introduce themselves by name and specify which pronoun they would prefer to be used during practice that day, for example, “she,” “he,” “they,” or their name in place of a pronoun. That way, you can avoid using incorrect pronouns and thus assigning people to the wrong gender.

## 2. Language can reinforce stereotypes

*“For our cardio training, we’ll be setting up stations with benches and exercise mats. I need a couple of strong boys to carry the benches over,” says the coach. When one of the participants lies down exhausted after 20 push-ups, the coach yells: “Hey, you’re not a little girl! You can do more than that – otherwise you can switch to girl push-ups.”*

By making these references to strong “boys” and weak “little girls,” the coach is reinforcing the stereotype that only boys are strong. The term “girl push-up” (instead of “knee push-up”) implies that women are always weaker than men. The reference to “girl push-ups” here also disparages anyone who chooses to do knee push-ups instead, whatever their reason for that may be.

*In the new team, Ali immediately notices that Ali is the only person of color – everyone else is white. During their first water break, Ali’s teammate Matthias claps Ali on the shoulder with a smile and says, “You’re not bad for an Arab.”*

Matthias, who made the comment to Ali, exposes his racist assumption that “Arabs” are not good at handball. On top of that, he labels Ali as an “Arab” without knowing how Ali would describe Ali’s own identity.



### Using language that does not employ stereotypes

Examine your own prejudices: Language can reinforce prejudices that lead to discrimination. All people have internalized certain prejudices. A good way to start counteracting discrimination can be to examine one’s own prejudices and assumptions. It is possible to express exactly the right sentiment without using language that, for example, makes light of or derides a person’s gender or race: “Come on, three more push-ups! You can do it!” or “I need four people to move these two benches over there” or “You’re a really good player – Where did practice before you joined our team?”

## 3. Language is a mirror for (in)visible issues in society

*During a throwing drill, Ali hears members of the team deride a boy as a “faggot” and a “sissy.” The coach does not react to this behavior.*

Verbal abuse, insults, and the use of terms or descriptions that people have not chosen for themselves (terms imposed by others rather than self-designations) are unfortunately commonplace in sports. Insults such as “pansy,” “little girl,” and other, similar terms are not only insulting to the person against whom they are leveled. This kind of derogatory language reinforces discriminatory structures in society. In the example, the boy is ridiculed as a “faggot.” Aside from being insulting, this confirms the stereotype that being gay is something bad. In many cases, these insulting and abusive names are terms imposed on marginalized groups by others; people belonging to these groups may not use these terms to refer to themselves. In general, “faggot” is not a common or favorable self-designation among gay people. If we do not respond to discriminatory language of this kind, participants quickly get the impression that everyone involved in the situation agrees that being gay is something negative. This example can also apply to other forms of discrimination, such as racist or sexist statements.



## Recognizing self-designations, stopping discriminatory language

Marginalized groups have self-designations that you can use as a guide for how to refer to people, e.g., people of color, Black people, trans/trans\* people, inter\*/intersex people. Together with the members of your organization, discuss different options for responding to discriminatory language that may be used during practice or at competitions.



## Questions for consideration

- What preconceptions do you have about the abilities of others? What things are women or men good at; what things are they not as good at? Are those assumptions accurate?
- How do you talk about other people? What assumptions do you communicate? How do you find out how other people want to be spoken about?
- What language do you use, e.g., in your practice sessions (English, German, verbal or sign language)? How does gender play a role in that language? What people are included or unintentionally excluded as a result?
- What rules does your organization have for participants (e.g., for respectful communication)? How are those rules communicated to new players?
- What role do coaches/administrators and other members play in the implementation of new language guidelines?
- How do you deal with your own insecurities regarding language?
- What consequences does your organization impose for verbal abuse such as the behavior described in the example above?

### Additional reading:

[genderdiversitylehre.fu-berlin.de/en/toolbox/starterkit/sprache/index.html](https://genderdiversitylehre.fu-berlin.de/en/toolbox/starterkit/sprache/index.html)

<https://guides.library.georgetown.edu/antiracism/glossary>

[geschichtgendern.de](https://geschichtgendern.de) (german only)

[ida-nrw.de/aktuelles/detail/sprachemachtrassismus](https://ida-nrw.de/aktuelles/detail/sprachemachtrassismus) (german only)



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