

Communication Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of CIMA's Communication Guidelines is to guide presenters in inclusive practices when creating and sharing presentations. These guidelines are not intended to inhibit responsible scholarly discussion or debate, but to aid efforts to use welcoming language and create more accessible presentations, per the [Code of Conduct](#).

Guidelines¹

Verbal Communication

- Speak for yourself. Use “I” when expressing your ideas, opinions, etc. Be aware that your perspective is not the same as everyone else and may not be considered to be the “normal” perspective.
- Respect diverse perspectives by engaging in curiosity-driven dialogue. Have compassion. Honor people's varied journeys and respect their humanity. Remember the goal of dialogue is not to change anyone's mind, but to offer and receive a perspective for consideration and learning. Even if you find yourself in disagreement with someone's perspective, remember that right and wrong binaries rarely facilitate connection and understanding. Note that **racism, bigotry, and all other forms of oppression are not a difference of opinion and will not be tolerated.**
- Be aware of the privileges, oppressions, and life experiences you carry and how they might affect your communication process.
- Use correct pronouns. Let people know how you would like to be addressed during introductions, including pronouns. If a person does not share their pronoun preference or if you are unsure of someone's pronouns, refer to the person by name. Use non-gendered collective pronouns when referring to a group.
- Work to stay engaged. When you feel uncomfortable or make mistakes, avoid changing the conversation topic in an attempt to sidestep discomfort.
- Be mindful of the impact our words and actions have on others. Acknowledge intent, but remember that intent does not equal impact. Acknowledge impact by criticizing ideas, not individuals.
- Interrupt bias. Hold one another accountable. If you observe something oppressive being communicated (by yourself or others), bring attention to it. If you experience feedback, it is your responsibility to keep learning and remind everyone that you still need deeper dialogue and reflection to gain understanding.

¹ Both the Verbal Communication and Visuals guidelines heavily draw from Utah Library Association's United in Diversity Communication Guidelines (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TYssr1jUaRuW6QsruBVFGGVgaTdUuiSn/preview>) developed by Christina Reyes in 2021.

- Provide subtitles/closed-captioning whenever possible. This makes it easier for users or audience members with hearing impairment to get the full picture.
- Give people time to process information. People with different cognitive abilities may need more time to frame their questions.
- Give credit where it is due.

Visuals

- Include alt text whenever possible. Screen readers use alt text to provide visually impaired users with a description of the graphic.
- Do not use *only* color to convey meaning. This may make your image impossible to understand for colorblind users.
- Make text and images large enough, for example, large enough for a presentation to be read from the back of the room.
- Avoid flickering images. People with photosensitive epilepsy can have seizures triggered by flickering or flashing.
- Describe important visual information, both on your slides and in the environment.

For more information about increasing accessibility, see [Resources and Tools](#).

Content Warnings

Content presented at CIMA conferences or meetings or online may tackle sensitive subject matter, including historical material containing words and/or images that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful. Discussions pertaining to such material should be conducted in a manner respectful to the people the material describes and/or their creators, and those present in the discussion.

It is requested that a warning about the sensitive topics to be addressed is stated in the presentation summary, and orally and in writing during the presentation before the sensitive topic or object is approached. This gives audience members the chance and autonomy to prepare themselves and/or choose to leave for any psychological or cultural concerns.

For more information about content warnings, see [Resources and Tools](#).

Resources and Tools

Accessibility

Society of American Archivists

Accessibility Requirements and Guidance for Online and In-Person Education Sessions

<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/education-committee/accessibility-requirements-and-guidance-for-online-and-in-person-education>

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

Welsh Government

Creating Accessible Documents

<https://gov.wales/creating-accessible-documents>

W3C Web Accessibility Initiative

Making Events Accessible

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/teach-advocate/accessible-presentations/>

Topics for Web Accessibility Presentations and Training

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/teach-advocate/accessibility-training/topics/>

Content Warnings

Recollection Wisconsin

The Toolkit: Content Statements

<https://recollectionwisconsin.org/the-toolkit-content-statements>

University of Michigan - Inclusive Teaching

An Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/an-introduction-to-content-warnings-and-trigger-warnings/>