



## Diversity & Inclusion Committee | Communication Suggestions

In keeping with the [FPS Culture and Values](#) and to foster an environment where everyone feels respected and valued, we're suggesting that communication be guided by the same principles.

These suggestions aren't meant to curtail open, honest dialog as this is necessary for meaningful exchanges to ensure that our work meets FPS' standard of excellence in the work we produce for our clients. Instead, these are designed to encourage conversations to be viewed as two-sided interactions where both participants and their input are respected and valued. It begins with language.

- **Language:**

Language matters. This is especially true as much of our communication is done via email, chat, or other remote media. When a reader is not able to hear your tone or see your facial expression, there is more room for misinterpretation. The responsibility for minimizing these opportunities for mistakes in intent lies with the speaker. Therefore, there are a few things that we could keep in mind concerning the language that we use when communicating with colleagues, as well as clients.

- Avoid the use of profanity.
- Do not make disparaging comments about any individual or group.
- Avoid using stereotypes that are meant to degrade.
- Use singular, gender-neutral pronouns if unsure about a person's preference.
- Do not intentionally talk down to your audience. (For example, it can be viewed as condescending to use industry jargon excessively when speaking to someone that you know has no background in that area.)
- Avoid talking about personal political and religious views.
- Minimize the use of colloquialism, especially if its usage is typically attributable to a particular group in a negative way.
- If it is necessary to use a language that you are not fluent in, take the time to learn the correct pronunciation, if possible.

- Humor can be a powerful conversational tool to ease apprehensions and create a sense of comradery or friendship. However, caution must be exercised when telling jokes to avoid offending anyone.
- A good rule of *tongue* is to [T.H.I.N.K.](#) before you speak.

Remember that none of the above are hard and fast rules when it comes to how language should be used, instead, your personal relationship with those with whom you interact should dictate what is appropriate. Unintentional offense can happen despite our best efforts, and rather than focus on avoiding all possible scenarios, we should be aware, apologize, and learn from our mistakes.

In addition to the language used, below are a few suggestions to help us make sure that our communications do not fail to meet our respected and valued standard, internally with our colleagues and externally with our clients, irrespective of the venue used.

Type of communication	What to avoid
Video	Inappropriate attire. Also, consider turning off video if you need to do something that may be distracting.
Chat	Capitalization of entire words as this is universally interpreted as a representation of shouting.
Email	Misspellings, especially of names. Making the effort to spell someone's name correctly goes a long way.
GIFs and Emojis	Any imagery that could be considered offensive or ethnically, gender, age, religious or physically insensitive.

The above suggestions do not cover every possible scenario. However, it is hoped that these are helpful reminders of things we should keep in mind when communicating both internally with colleagues and externally with clients.

Lastly, remember most people respond better to positive and encouraging discourse. Therefore, look for opportunities to motivate and praise, even if it has to come with a bit of constructive criticism.