

Age Diversity

Refer to age only if it is necessary. Use respectful language and consistent style if age is relevant.

Guidance

If age is relevant, follow style conventions

Use respectful terms when you write about age

Refer to level of study instead of age

Release notes

If age is relevant, follow style conventions

Question whether age is relevant. Avoid referring to a person's age or an age group if it's not relevant.

If you need to mention age, follow style conventions:

- When the reference to age comes before a noun, punctuate it with hyphens.
- Unless the age reference begins a sentence, use numerals.

Example

- A 39-year-old man faces court today on several charges.
- You can withdraw your super once you're 65, even if you're still working.
- Fourteen-year-old Jasmine Greenwood is the youngest Australian on the Paralympic Games squad.

Use respectful terms when you write about age

Avoid characterising age references when it's not strictly relevant.

Standalone words in everyday use, like 'old' and 'young', can carry bias or unintended subtext. Words that carry stereotypes, for example 'elderly', are not acceptable.

When an age or age range is relevant to a fact, you can use the term 'people' with the age reference.

Example

- Survey data showed people aged 15 to 17 years were the highest proportion of internet users.

Inclusivity requirements

Use respectful and inclusive language that talks to the person, not their difference. It's the law.

Commonwealth laws include:

- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*

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- [Public Service Act 1999](#).

Older people

The term ‘older people’ is acceptable. Don’t use the term ‘old people’. It is disrespectful.

Write this

- older people
- retired people or retirees
- older Australians
- senior Australians or seniors

Not this

- old people

Choose the term that best fits the context.

Example

- More older Australians are using smartphones to do their business.

Young people

The most neutral term is ‘young people’. ‘Youth’ is a gender-neutral term and is also acceptable.

Be careful using the plural ‘youths’. This is often used to refer to male youths only and may carry other connotations.

Write this

- young people
- youth

Not this

- junior or juniors

Depending on the context, you can use the words ‘adolescents’, ‘children’ and ‘babies’. ‘Kids’ can be suitable, depending on the [content’s voice and tone](#).

Example

- The eSafety Commissioner resources for kids and young people are tailored to different reading ages.
- Children in Defence families can need support through a move.

Refer to level of study instead of age

Refer to students by the level of study they are doing, not by their age, unless the age is relevant.

Example

- preschool students
- high-school students

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- postgraduate students

Tertiary students can be many ages. Refer to them simply as ‘students’ or, in the case of PhD students, as ‘PhD candidates’.

Avoid using ‘mature-age student’ unless it is relevant to what you are writing.

Release notes

The digital edition includes a section on age diversity. It has more examples of appropriate terms to refer to age than either the sixth edition or the Content Guide.

Like the sixth edition, the digital edition recommends using ‘youth’ as a neutral term.

The Content Guide recommended against using the term ‘youth’.