

HIV / AIDS style guide / National Union of Journalists & UK NGO AIDS Consortium for the Third World.

Contributors

National Union of Journalists (Great Britain)
UK NGO AIDS Consortium for the Third World

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Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>



HIV/AIDS STYLE GUIDE

& UK NGO AIDS CONSORTIUM
FOR THE THIRD WORLD

Equality Council,
National Union of Journalists,
Acorn House, 314-320 Gray's Inn Road,
London WC1X 8DP.
Tel: 01-278 7916

TERMS TO AVOID	WHY?	USE INSTEAD
Aids	First, because the word already means many things. Second, because it is an acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and using capitals helps to remind readers.	AIDS
Carrying AIDS AIDS carrier AIDS positive	This confuses the two distinct phases of being infected with HIV and having AIDS. People can "have" AIDS but can't "carry" it.	HIV antibody positive people with HIV
AIDS test	The most commonly used test detects antibodies to HIV. There is also an "antigen" test, which detects the presence of the virus itself. This is not widely used. There cannot be a test for AIDS, as this depends on a diagnosis according to clinical symptoms.	HIV antibody test
AIDS virus	Often used as a shorthand term, by WHO among others, this can easily cause confusion between HIV and AIDS unless used with caution.	HIV (Human Immuno- deficiency Virus)

Catching AIDS
(ie become infected
with HIV)

It isn't possible to catch AIDS. It is possible to catch HIV, but even this is misleading as it suggests transmission is similar to colds or flu.

contract HIV
become HIV
positive

Catch AIDS
(ie develop AIDS)

as above

Develop AIDS
have a diagnosis
of AIDS

AIDS sufferer

Having AIDS does not mean being ill all the time. Someone with AIDS can continue to work and live a normal life for some time after diagnosis. Suffering is therefore not appropriate.

Person with AIDS

AIDS victim

Suggests helplessness, which is no longer appropriate.

Person with AIDS
Person who has
AIDS

Innocent victim

Suggests anyone else with AIDS is guilty.

High risk groups

It is now clear that there is risk behaviour, not high risk groups. The fact of being classified as a member of any particular group does not put anyone at greater risk, but what he or she does, regardless of groups, may do.

Full blown AIDS

When the correct distinction between HIV and AIDS is always made, there is no need to use the term "full blown AIDS".

AIDS

USE WITH CARE

promiscuous

implies a moral overtone which may be inappropriate; also very imprecise.

prostitute

not everyone who has many partners is a "prostitute". Not everyone who takes money or goods in exchange for sex has many partners.

AIDS patient

Only appropriate when someone is ill. Care is needed to distinguish this from HIV infection, when "patient" is not appropriate.

Catastrophe
Disaster

There are still very few parts of the world where this is an accurate description.

Plague

Plague suggests a contagious disease, which AIDS is not. Epidemic is a better description.