More of us are living longer, so this is a good time to give extra thought to how we talk and write about aging and even how we use images. Ageism, which is stereotyping based on age, is harmful to both the individual and our society. By communicating in ways which take on ageism, we are contributing to making our community more age-inclusive, more age-friendly.

We hope you will use this style guide in your communications for and about older adults.

Our words matter.

**Outdated terminology** that promotes assumptions and stereotypes based on age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seniors (and “our seniors”)</th>
<th>Older adult or older person/older people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior citizens</td>
<td>People 60 (65, 70…) and older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The aged, old person, elderly, spry, grandmotherly</td>
<td>Elder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**These words are preferred.** (See AP Stylebook)

- Seniors (and “our seniors”)
- Older adult or older person/older people
- People 60 (65, 70…) and older
- Elder

**Is age relevant in the examples below?**

A 73-year-old man was in a car accident...

**Ask yourself:** Does is matter that the man is 73? What if he is 43? Would you mention his age?

A 75-year-old grandmother was appointed to the Supreme Court today.

**Ask yourself:** Does it matter that she is 75? Does it matter that she is a grandmother?

**Is the description relevant, or correct?**

A man attacked a 64-year-old elderly woman...

**Ask yourself:** What is the connotation of the word “elderly?” Elderly implies frail, incapacitated, diminished.

**Writing 69 years young is considered ageist because it infers that being old is in inherently bad.**

People living in nursing homes are residents, not patients, because where they are living is their home.

Avoid writing ageist storylines using words like silver tsunami, demographic cliff/time bomb. They imply disaster.

Avoid using the word “still” before a verb. E.g. Still working. Still water skiing. It suggests that doing so is remarkable.
### In print: fonts and images matter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Use at least a 12 pt. font. Fonts with smaller characters may need to be 14 pt. Consider using serif fonts for text and sans serif for headlines.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use inclusive images of people ages 60 to 100. According to research, most adults think of themselves as younger than their chronological age.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Avoid using all caps. **&lt;br&gt;ALL CAPS ARE HARDER TO READ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoid using more than two or three typefaces in one document.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoid difficult-to-read colors.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Our community, like the rest of the nation, is aging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoid designing materials with text in front of photos or patterned background images.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoid using glossy or colored paper.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use left-aligned (or flush left) text rather than using justified text.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use “sentence case” for titles, headlines and headings rather than capitalizing each word.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Use italics and **bold <strong>sparingly.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Serif text example, Times Roman, 12 pt.: Older adult housing options are numerous

Serif text example, Garamond, 14 pt.: Older adult housing options are numerous

Sans Serif text example, Arial, 12 pt.: Older adult housing options are numerous

Sans Serif text example, Calibri, 14 pt.: Older adult housing options are numerous

To enhance readability, add extra space, called leading, between lines of text.

Single line or automatic leading: A greater percentage of the population is 55-plus than ever before.

1 1/2 line or increased leading: A greater percentage of the population is 55-plus than ever before.
Website design matters.

- Users of all ages read just 28% of the words on a webpage. Avoid crowding and lengthy pages.
- Include a simple description of every image for those who use text-to-speech technology.
- Add subtitles to videos.
- Use large button sizes and include text on the buttons.
- Make key information such as address and phone number easy to locate.
- Avoid complicated menus.
- Avoid using captcha.
- New tools make websites more accessible. E.g. The Accessibility Tool for WordPress allows visitors to increase text size, change to gray scale, add contrast or change a background.
- Provide a text enlargement option on the site and keep contrast high between the text and its background.
- Fonts should be a minimum of 16px.
- Make key information such as address and phone number easy to locate.
- Avoid using captcha.
- Many standard and widely available fonts score highly for web accessibility. Choose common fonts or font families that have strong and unique characters/letters.

Visit our contact page

www.lifespanrochester.org
To learn more about the age-friendly movement, visit websites such as:

- Changing the Narrative
  https://changingthenarrativeco.org
- Old School
  https://oldschool.info
- Frameworks Institute
  https://encorenetwork.org/downloads/frameworks-institute-a-communications-toolkit
- Age Without Ageism
  https://oldschool.info/resource/age-without-ageism
- Ageism is All Around Us
  https://oldschool.info/resource/ageism-is-all-around-us
- Booming Encore
  https://boomingencore.com/en

To learn about Monroe County’s Age-friendly initiative, visit:

https://monroeagingalliance.org/our-work

Sources for this guide:

- Lifespan of Greater Rochester
- Changing the Narrative
- California Assisted Living
- AP Stylebook
- Santa Clara County Communication Guide
- Age-friendly DC Reaching Older Adults More Effectively Through Print
- Age-friendly Business Resource Guide
- Age-Friendly NYC
- Broome County Age-friendly
- The National Center to Reframe Aging
  https://www.reframingaging.org
- SiteImprove
  https://www.siteimprove.com/glossary/accessible-fonts
- NetGuru
  https://www.netguru.com/blog/accessible-design-senior-users
- People over Forty Feel 20% Younger than their Age: Subjective Age across the Lifespan
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3969748
- How to Avoid Ageist Language in Aging Research? An Overview and Guidelines,
  Carmen Bowman & Weng Marc Limm,
  Sept. 2021

Lifespan is a regional nonprofit providing information, guidance and services that help older adults and caregivers take on the challenges and opportunities of our longer lives.