

Inclusive Language Implementation Guidelines



Executive Summary

At the end of November of 2020, the UEFI Forum Board passed a Resolution directing the use of Inclusive Language in specifications and other communications created as part of the work of the Forum. This document captures the text of Resolution itself and provides guidelines for Work Groups and others preparing or maintaining content published by the UEFI Forum.

Resolution on Inclusive Language

By unanimous consent, the UEFI Board approved the following Resolution at the November 30th 2020 meeting:

WHEREAS, inclusive language is essential to productive collaboration; and

WHEREAS, the words we use to describe our technologies send messages that can bring people together or isolate and divide them; and

WHEREAS, by using inclusive language, we avoid unintentionally perpetuating stereotypes, alienating colleagues or creating a less efficient development and collaboration environment;

NOW THEREFORE, [we] hereby resolve and adopt the following “Principle of Inclusive Terminology” as follows:

Model Principle of Inclusive Terminology

Whenever possible, inclusive terminology shall be used to describe technical capabilities and relationships. Insensitive, archaic and non-inclusive terms, especially those that rely for understanding on cultural context and have high potential to distract teams or impair efficiency, shall be avoided. For the purpose of this Principle, “inclusive terminology” means terminology perceived or likely to be perceived as welcoming or at least neutral by everyone, regardless of their personal characteristics (such as race, color, sex, or gender).

New specifications, standards, documentation and other collateral shall be developed using inclusive terminology. As feasible, existing and legacy specifications and documentation shall be updated to identify and replace non-inclusive terms with alternatives more descriptive and tailored to the technical capability or relationship.

Implementation Guidelines

This section describes some rules of thumb for how to go about developing specification and other communication content in a way that follows the Model Principle of Inclusive Terminology. While any one situation may call for an exception, in general Work Groups and others preparing collateral to be

published in the name of the UEFI Forum should follow these implementation guidelines as the default course of action. Generally avoiding terminology that may be unwelcoming will likely lead to more precision and clarity in specification text. This is especially true for non-native English readers since such wording would not typically require the reader to understand cultural or locale-specific context in order to derive correct meaning.

Specific deprecated terms

The terms “**master/slave**” to describe a model where one device or process controls another as subordinate should be avoided. Alternatives such as “main/secondary”, “main/subordinate”, “primary/secondary”, “primary/replica”, “host/target”, “leader/follower”, “orchestrator/worker”, “initiator/responder” or similar descriptive terminology should be used as applicable and where possible.

The terms “**blacklist**” to describe something (i.e., users, websites, emails, or applications) blocked or not permitted and “**whitelist**” to describe counterparts that are allowed or accepted, should be avoided. Alternatives such as “blocklist/passlist”, “denylist/allowlist”, “permitted/refused” or similar descriptive terminology should be used as applicable and where possible.

The list of specific terms may be extended over time.

For all terms on this list, all instances of the words should be removed, regardless of meaning in context or isolation from other terms. For example, the term “master” should not be used anywhere in the prose in the specification even if it is not used in close proximity to the term “slave” and even if the intended meaning does not relate to the concept of “slave owner”. The English language provides rich alternatives and avoiding the deprecated terms altogether avoids any question about inclusiveness. As an example, consider idea of “master branch” with no reference to other branches in the containing text. In this case replacing “master” with “main” or “primary” still conveys the meaning and avoids any debate about whether the semantics of “master” in this context imply an unwelcoming connotation or not.

Choose terms that align with the Principle

While the specific terms noted above are the initial targets for treatment under these guidelines, the Principle calls for all terms that might not be perceived as welcoming to be avoided. Always be mindful of the Principle when maintaining existing specification content or creating new content.

Check with other groups before making unilateral change

In some cases, similar work may be completed or pending by groups that own standards referenced by UEFI Forum specifications. It may also be possible to find community agreements for such changes independent of the actual standard if that is no longer being updated. By way of an example, there is clarification around the terms Master/Slave for ATA specifications that can be seen here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_ATA

In cases where other groups or the community have already decided on replacement terminology for canonical definitions, UEFI Specifications should make similar changes to remain aligned with those other works.

Lead in descriptive prose where other groups' terms do not satisfy the Principle

If another standards group's document(s) have not been updated to align with the Principle, UEFI Forum specifications should define a replacement for referenced content.. This should at least apply in all descriptive language prose portions of UEFI Forum Specifications. Specifically, this means picking an alternative and then providing a cross-reference to the original wording and the specification that includes the canonical definition for each term of concern. This can either be done by means of a glossary entry if the specification includes that feature, or by means of parenthetical note or footnote on first use of the replacement term.

The goal is to use better wording but at the same time make it possible for readers to positively correlate language in a UEFI Specification that uses better wording with language in another group's specification that contains a canonical definition for the same concept.

Consistency

As much as possible, Work Groups should coordinate choices of alternative terminology. The goal should be that the same object or concept is generally described using the same terminology in all the specifications.

Work Group supervision

While some instances of language that needs revision are going to be obvious, the Board recommends that Work Groups supervise and approve all changes to the Specifications to ensure that the technical integrity of the work is preserved.

Front matter statement

Specifications should include the following statement as part of the front matter content in the document under a heading of "Principle of Inclusive Terminology":

The UEFI Forum follows a Principle of Inclusive Terminology in building and maintaining content for specifications. This means that efforts are made to ensure that all wording is perceived or likely to be perceived as welcoming by everyone regardless of personal characteristics. In some cases, the Forum acknowledges that wording derived from earlier work, for example references to legacy specifications not controlled by the Forum, may not follow this principle. In order to preserve compatibility for code that reads on legacy specifications, particularly where that specification is no longer under maintenance or development, language in this specification may appear out of sync with the Principle. The Forum is resolved to work with other standards development bodies to eliminate such examples over time. In the meanwhile, by acknowledging and calling attention to this issue the hope is to promote discussion and action towards more complete use of Inclusive Language reflective of the diverse and innovative population of the technical community that works on standards.

Phasing implementation

The Board would like to see prompt action on the Principle. That said, completing updates for all possible cases of poorly chosen language may take some time, in no small part because it may require coordination with other groups. With those competing priorities in mind work groups should consider phasing the implementation work towards the end goal of achieving completely inclusive language throughout the specifications. For example:

- *Phase 1: remove specific deprecated terms and remove non-inclusive language in any descriptive prose where the UEFI document in question is the controlling definition.*
- *Phase 2: work with other groups to change terms that UEFI Specifications use by reference.*
- *Phase 3: review code examples and data structure definitions for use of inclusive terminology. Where possible remove non-inclusive terms from compound names that are part of code relevant definitions.*

It should be possible to add the front matter statement and complete Phase 1 promptly (e.g. Q1 2021), and the Board specifically agrees to the use of an errata release to deliver specification updates for this purpose (in other words, a full formal review cycle is not required).

The Board recommends proactivity on phase 2 activities noting that going first is sometimes less painful and complicated than trying to keep up with other groups setting direction on changes that must be coordinated across group boundaries. This phase can be approach in parallel with phase 1 activities.

Phase 3 activities will need to be coordinated with code base owners and projects in an attempt to avoid needless disruption to the ecosystem while still making forward progress on the effort towards inclusive language.