



TECHNISCHE
UNIVERSITÄT
DARMSTADT

Checklist for gender- and diversity-sensitive visual language

**Why inclusive visuals are important and how we can
consciously use them**



Images influence how we think. That is why visual language is important.

Images send **messages** that shape our thinking, actions and perceptions. They also **influence** how we view society and can reinforce or change our unconscious stereotypes and preconceptions.

By consciously selecting and designing images, we can show that **diversity is normal**.

This makes everyone feel more included.

Images should



express respect and self-determination

promote equality

present roles and tasks in a balanced way

take inclusive representation into account

ensure accessibility



not use stereotypes or clichés regarding age, gender, sexual orientation, origin, religion or physical ability

not resort to sexist representations, attributions and associations

refrain from using images of people to avoid discrimination and tokenism

✓ Planning

What questions can I ask myself:

- What is the image supposed to convey? What do I want to show?
- What cliché pitfalls might I fall into?
- What roles, hierarchies or power relations am I reinforcing with my image design or image selection?

What can I look out for:

Places, clothing, accessories and body language can convey power or subordination, attributing or denying abilities and skills.

→ *Here you can consciously examine and, if necessary, compensate for this.*

How is my own positioning (e.g. gender, origin, profession, age) reflected in image design and selection?

→ [More information „HOW-TO“ Bildsprache der TU Darmstadt](#)

✓ Visual aesthetics

What questions can I ask myself:

- How can people be arranged in pictures so that everyone is depicted equally?
- Who stands at the front, who stands at the back, who sits, who is in the centre and who is depicted at the edge, and what effect does this have?

What can I look out for:

Make conscious use of image aesthetics (perspectives, viewing angles, focus and proportions) to promote equality and diversity.

→ *If possible, use several images to avoid overloading them.*

✓ People (Models)

What questions can I ask myself:

- Who is depicted? How diverse is the group of people as a whole?
- Are disadvantaged or underrepresented groups depicted? If so, how?
- Who explains, who listens? Who is shown as an expert or leader?
- Are people shown in equal and active roles?

What can I look out for:

Disadvantaged and/or underrepresented groups should not only be shown in relation to specific topics. For example, people with disabilities should not only be shown in connection with inclusion. Or people of colour (PoC) only in connection with internationality.

→ *Show diversity in gender, age, ethnicity, disability, body shapes and lifestyles – without highlighting it. An image does not have to depict all dimensions of diversity.*

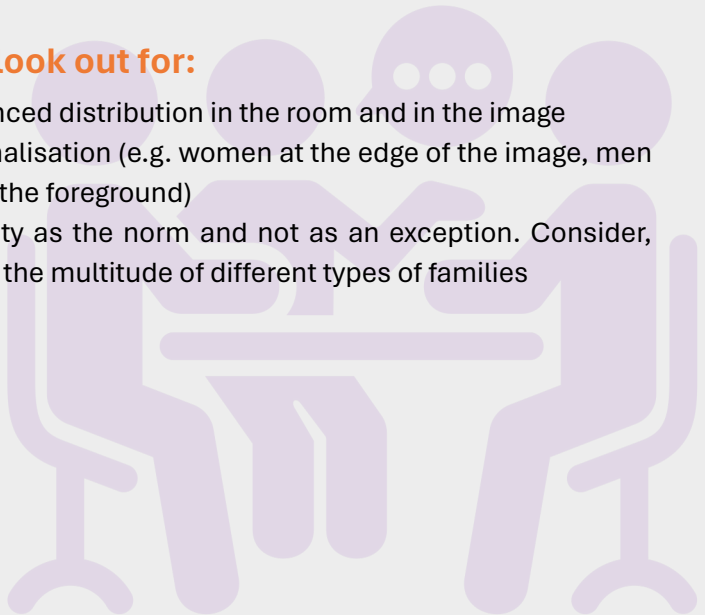
✓ Group photographs

What questions can I ask myself:

- Does the overall presentation contribute to equality?
- Is the presentation balanced and arranged in a respectful manner?

What can I look out for:

- ensure balanced distribution in the room and in the image
- avoid marginalisation (e.g. women at the edge of the image, men dominant in the foreground)
- show diversity as the norm and not as an exception. Consider, for example, the multitude of different types of families



✔ Storytelling

What questions can I ask myself:

- Are stereotypical roles being repeated or are other perspectives opened up?
- Test question regarding sexist representation: Would a male-identified person/a man also be depicted in this way/in this position?
- Why was this image chosen? What message is being conveyed? Which target group is it intended to appeal to?
- What associations do the images trigger? Does the image match the text? Is it necessary to depict people? Could another image better describe the situation?

What can I look out for:

Representation also means making previously underrepresented perspectives visible. The purpose of using images must always be critically questioned and examined.

Refraining from using images of people can also be a decision, for example, if it avoids discriminatory representations or tokenism. Abstract representations can often be a good alternative.

→ Consider what effect you want the image to have.

✔ Accessibility

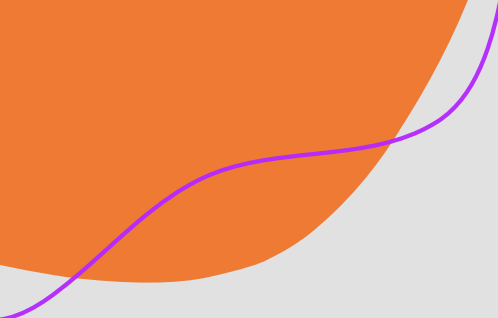
- sufficient contrast, large fonts and clear graphics are more 'readable'
- remember to provide alternative text (image description as text)

→ *Check accessibility of colour contrasts: www.whocanuse.com*



Further information and specific instructions on implementation can be found here:

- [Gender-inclusive language at TU Darmstadt](#)
- [Diversity-sensitive imagery Suggestions for a diversity-sensitive imagery in communication at the TUM](#)



This checklist was compiled by the [Gender Equality Office](#) and the [Office for Anti-Discrimination and Diversity](#) of Technical University Darmstadt.

Please get in touch if you have any questions:

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& DIVERSITÄT TU DARMSTADT



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