Fell running inclusive communications guidance

Written by the Women and Girls in Fell Running Working Group. Adopted by the WFRA Committee in August 2023.

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Most organisations, big and small, have information to help guide the way they communicate. This includes brand guides covering areas such as values, logos and imagery (e.g. Run Together brand guide) and writing style guides covering areas such as readability, accessibility, spelling and language (e.g. Wales.com style guide).

Inclusive communication is an important part of this. The creator of the Conscious Style Guide suggests:

> *"Think critically about using language—including words, portrayals, framing, and representation—to empower instead of limit"*
>
> *"Asking yourself questions such as: What are my assumptions about my audience? Will this cause harm to historically excluded communities?"*
> *- Karen Yin*

While this guide has been developed by the Women and Girls in Fell Running Working Group and draws on feedback we have received from women, its scope is broader to ensure it is as useful as possible. The guide is for anyone writing about fell running (e.g. clubs, race organisers) as well as the Welsh Fell Runners Association (WFRA) itself.

Imagery

'Alternative text' is text that is provided as a substitute for images and should be used for all images or graphics. It is displayed if the image is not loaded or if someone is using a screen reader. Alternative text should be used across different platforms, including web pages and social media. See the following guides for how to add alternative text to images on social media:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter

There is a lack of diversity in outdoor imagery in general, and ensuring that people see themselves represented matters. As Sabrina Pace-Humphreys, co-founder of Black Trail Runners, says: ***"you cannot be what you cannot see"***.

The lack of visibility of women role models in fell running was one of the issues identified in the Working Group, as well as a concern about the perceived macho reputation of fell races

generally. SheRACES have a [Race Guidelines](#) document which makes some suggestions about imagery of women in races:

> *"The start line image of a race is often one of just men - women are less inclined to push our way to the front. To make women feel welcome, include a range of images of competitors in your marketing. From those at the front, to the back markers. Including women of all ages, shapes and colours. Show us we belong."*
> *- SheRACES*

When using imagery, think about…
- What do your images say about what your race/club/organisation is like?
- How will people interpret your race/club/organisation if you use those images?
- Will they think fell running is for people like them?

Writing (general)

Consider the **readability** of what you have written, i.e. how easy it is to read something. [Texthelp provides guidance](#) about why this is important and top tips to improve it. You can check the 'readability score' of your writing online on various websites, e.g. [readable.com](#).

On Microsoft Word documents, you can [check the accessibility](#) to see what the readability is, and it also flags issues such as missing alternative text and bad colour contrast.

Avoid jargon and acronyms. Where this is not possible, make sure you clearly explain what they mean.

Always write in a way that is respectful and inclusive of others, particularly when referring to **protected characteristics** (e.g. age, race, disability, sex, religion). Generally you should only refer to disability, gender, race, or ethnicity where it is relevant to what you are communicating about.

Use **gender-inclusive language**:

If you're writing…	Consider this instead…
His/her (when talking about runners generically, rather than a specific individual)	Their
Men and women Ladies and gentlemen	People Everyone Adults (girls and boys are people but not men and women - in the context of races this can be pertinent)
Mankind Manmade	Humankind Artificial or human-caused

Be aware of gender stereotypes and the impact that this can have. A report by Women in Sport explores how gender stereotypes influence young girls' experiences of sport. Examples that the UN gives are:

"She throws/runs/fights like a girl."
"In a manly way."
"Oh, that's women's work."
"Thank you to the ladies for making the room more beautiful."
"Men just don't understand."

Writing (specific to fell running)

Fell running has several acronyms specific to the sport. WFRA, FRA, RO, A/B/C, S/M/L, ER, NS, LK, PM. Even the term 'fell running' itself might not be clear to those who have not taken part before. While these terms are explained on the Fell Runners Association, Welsh Fell Runners Association and fellrace.com websites, not everyone will visit or be aware of these pages. Be sure to **explain these acronyms and terms clearly** when used.

In the SheRACES Race Guidelines document, they suggest the following:

"Consider the language used in marketing - words like "toughest" and "dangerous" may appeal to men. But for many women they can be a barrier to entering, making us question our capability even if we do have a strong chance of finishing. Instead give advice on what is needed to finish, for example the average pace, total climbing, and minimum training guidelines."
- SheRACES

If you state that runners need to have 'experience' or that some races are 'challenging', it is more helpful to be specific, i.e. are the races longer or more technical (and what does 'technical' mean - define terms accurately), and what kind of experience do people need? Speed can also be a concern for some people. Consider how you can describe the pace of races accurately and more inclusively where appropriate, e.g. this race is suitable for runners of varied paces, or this race is (also) suitable for those running at a slower or steadier pace.

Sometimes races are 'tough', and descriptions should accurately describe the type of race, terrain covered, support provided and the kit needed to be worn/carried in order to run them safely. Consider how this sort of language is used (e.g. how often certain words are used, and in what context) to ensure descriptions are not overexaggerated to appeal to certain people which might in turn put off others. An example of the kind of language that could be off-putting for some is:

"JUST for fellies, really; no roadies or people that are going to find it tough. Steep up from the start, there is no respite."

An example of good practice is Ourea Events' policy for their race descriptions, which says they will:

"accurately and fairly describe each race using the appropriate language to describe the course and the nature of the challenge in a gender-neutral manner"

Therefore a better approach here would be to stress that good off-road shoes will be required due to the steepness of the course. The Machen fell race, for example, has a good detailed description of the race and what clothing and shoes are appropriate.

Additional resources

- Access for all: inclusive communications guide by the English Federation of Disability Sport, Big Voice and Sport England
- The Conscious Style Guide is a database of different guides about inclusive communication
- Some examples of how inclusive communication is being approached is explained in Overcoming Barriers To Female Participation In Trail Running: Race Director's Blog by Shane Ohly, Race Director for Ourea Events (Dragon's Back and more)