



# Building an anti-racist, inclusive culture with language

Intuit content design team

# Who we are



**Sarah Mohs**  
(she/her)  
Content Strategy &  
Systems



**Caitlyn  
Halliburton**  
(she/her)  
Content Designer  
Mint



**Nicole Baptista**  
(she/her)  
Sr Content Designer  
QuickBooks



**Jennifer  
Kennedy**  
(she/her)  
Sr Content Designer  
Mint

I've stopped saying the phrase, "You need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable." Instead, I tell people to "use your discomfort to learn."

–Lily Zheng

How it started

# Our values

## Integrity Without Compromise

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We speak the truth and assume best intent.

We value trust above all else.

We do the right thing, even when no one is looking.

## Courage

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We are bold and fearless in how we think and act.

We relentlessly hold a high bar for performance.

We value speed, a bias for learning and action.

## Customer Obsession

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We fall in love with our customers' problems.

We deliver unrivaled customer benefit to power their prosperity.

We sweat every detail of the experience to deliver excellence.

## Stronger Together

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We champion diversity, inclusion, and a respectful environment.

We thrive on diverse voices to challenge and inform decisions.

We deliver exceptional results so others can count on us.

## We Care And Give Back

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We are stewards of the future.

We strengthen the communities around us.

We strive to give everyone the opportunity to prosper.

# Content design @ Intuit

[contentdesign.intuit.com](https://contentdesign.intuit.com)

# We did a quick audit

Once we identified terms, we poked around to see where they showed up.

And asked everyone we could to help.



## You can't access mileage just yet.

This feature is only available for master admins.

## Setup is done for you

A payroll expert will set up your payroll for you and answer any questions. Hit the ground running with white glove customized setup.<sup>4</sup>

### Reset your password or recover your user ID for QuickBooks Online

by QuickBooks • QuickBooks Online • 35 • Updated 2 hours ago

Check all email addresses you might've used to sign up to your account. Make sure to unblock emails from Intuit. Learn more how to whitelist Intuit emails.

However, taxpayers should take note of the following exceptions to the new rules:

- **Grandfathered Debt:** Taxpayers who took out their mortgage prior to October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1987, can deduct all interest paid.
- **Home Acquisition Debt:** If you took out a mortgage after October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1987, but before December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017, you can still deduct up to \$1 million (\$500,000 if married filing separately).
- **Home Equity Debt:** If you got a second mortgage after October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1987, but before December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017, for any reason besides building or renovating your home, you can deduct mortgage interest up to \$100,000 (\$50,000 if married filing separately).

NAME	EMAIL	USER TYPE
James Theisen	james_theisen...	Master admin
James Test	james.theisen...	Admin
Andy Cap	andrea_caper...	Admin
Sarah Vollmer	sarah_vollmer...	Standard user
Smitha Papolu	smitha_papolu...	Admin



# We mapped out what needed to be done

Once we broke it into smaller action items, the project felt less overwhelming.

Anti-racist language project					
File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was yesterday at 8:24 AM					
100% 123 Arial 10 B I A					
A1	Step				
1	Step	Assigned	Status	Due Date	Notes
2	Identify terms/phrases	Core team	Complete	7/24	
3	Identify occurrence within Intuit content	Core team	Complete	7/31	Generally at the level of silos or stores Martina to look at TT, ask in-product content designers, Jennifer K to sync with Mike Walkusky and Caitlin on Mint
4	Create discussion guide slides	Core team	Complete	7/31	
5	Draft DACI	Core team	Complete	7/31	
6	Contact African Ancestry Network	Jennifer Kennedy	Complete	8/7	Confirm involvement and identify the point person
7	Contact REAL team	Jennifer Kennedy	Complete	8/7	Contact is Charisse Daggs who works for Scott
8	Contact Scott Beth	Jen Schmich	Complete	8/7	
9	Contact PMs	Jen Schmich	Complete	8/7	
10	Contact PD execs	Jen Schmich	Complete		
11	Schedule forum kick-off	Jen Schmich	Complete	8/7	
12	Forum	All	Complete	8/14	Core team to present and facilitate discussion; identify next steps and input on ways to adopt changes beyond style guide
13	Draft 1 - Gather inputs on alternatives	Core team, contributors	Complete	8/28	
14	Revise	Core team	Complete	9/4	
15	Draft 2 - Gather inputs on alternatives	Core team, contributors	Complete	9/11	
16	Revise	Core team	Complete	9/18	
17	Share with EGs for feedback	Core team	In progress		Intuit Latino Network wants to organize an event; Caitlyn and Charisse to follow up
18	Update style guide	Sarah Mohs	Complete	9/25	
19	Promote changes to style guide	Core team	Complete	9/25	
20	Recommendation to PD, PM	Core team	In progress	9/30	
21	SNAP article	Jen	Complete		Contact editor; Jennifer might be able to draft something depending on her DPM
22					
23					
24					
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26					
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28					
29					
30					
31					
+ Steps Driver/Approver Contributors Informed Contact log Tracking Sheet					

# We invited people to share input

We hosted a series of forums to get feedback and listen to folks' POVs.

This ended up being the most important step.



# We created principles for folks to follow

Establishing principles  
helped us put people  
first and scale our work.

**We take the lived  
experiences of Black,  
Indigenous, and people of  
color into account.**

When basing our decisions to use or not use words, we empathize with communities that have experienced disparate harm to improve how we communicate for all. We follow our Intuit value of Stronger Together.

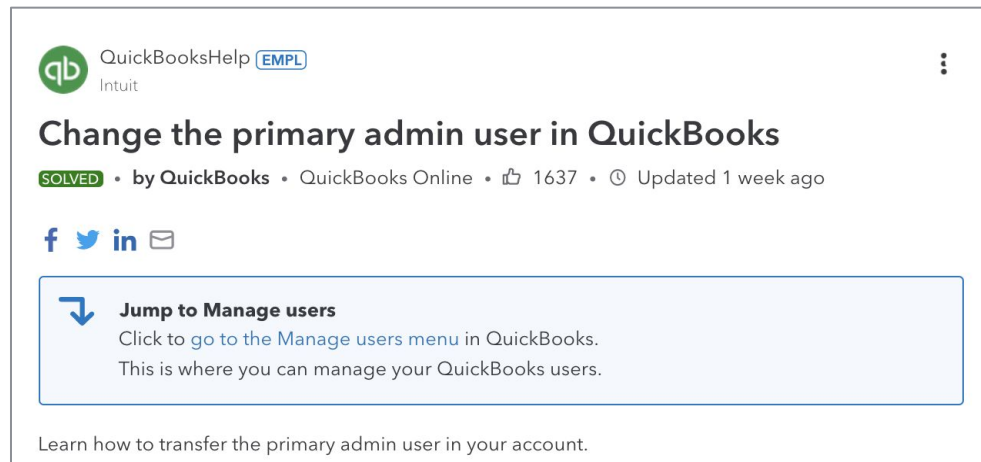
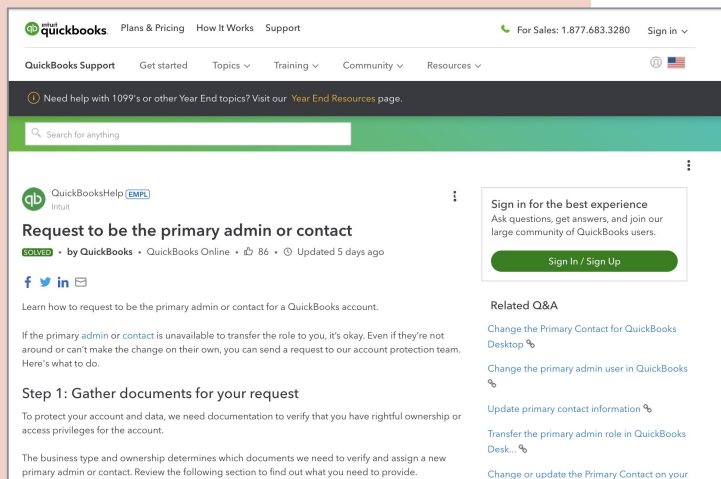
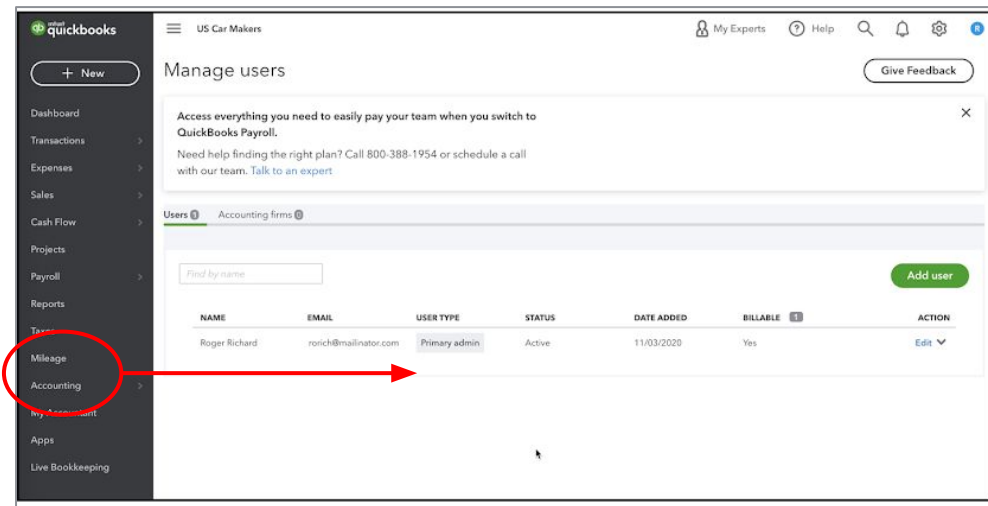


How it's going

# Master admin

We replaced "master" with "primary" across QuickBooks Online and are working on QuickBooks Desktop.

289 instances of Master Admin have been edited to Primary Admin so far.



# White glove

We used “white glove” to describe a premium service in Payroll. But the term has racist roots. (What’s more, fewer than half of our customers understood what it meant.)

We replaced it with “expert,” which is more inclusive and more clear.

Edits (web, product, code): 506

## Payroll features

### ✓ Full-service payroll

Includes automated taxes and forms

- ✓ Auto Payroll
- ✓ Health benefits for your team
- ✓ Expert product support
- ✓ Same-day direct deposit
- ✓ Workers' comp administration
- ✓ HR support center
- ✓ **White glove customized setup**
- ✓ 24/7 expert product support
- ✓ Track time and projects on the go
- ✓ Tax Penalty Protection<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ Personal HR advisor

## Payroll features

### ✓ Full-service payroll

Includes automated tax and forms

- ✓ Auto Payroll
- ✓ Health benefits for your team
- ✓ 401(k) plans
- ✓ Expert product support
- ✓ Same-day direct deposit
- ✓ Workers' comp administration
- ✓ HR support center
- ✓ **Expert setup**
- ✓ 24/7 expert product support
- ✓ Track time and projects on the go
- ✓ Tax penalty protection<sup>\*\*</sup>
- ✓ Personal HR advisor

# Expanding our guidance

How can we help educate our colleagues about oppressive language and microaggressions that happen in everyday conversations?

Hold down the fort

Peanut gallery

Powwow

Spirit animal

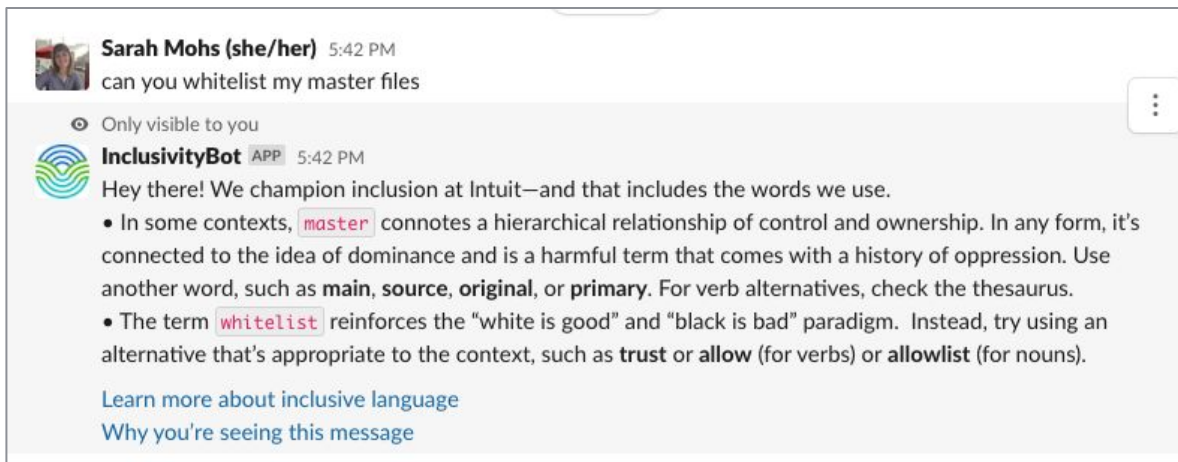
Tribe

Circle the wagons

# InclusivityBot

We partnered with our Slack devs to build a bot. If you send a message in a Slack channel that contains an insensitive word, the bot will reply privately and suggest more inclusive alternatives.

Employees installed it in **665+** Slack channels. Scanned **39,686** words daily.



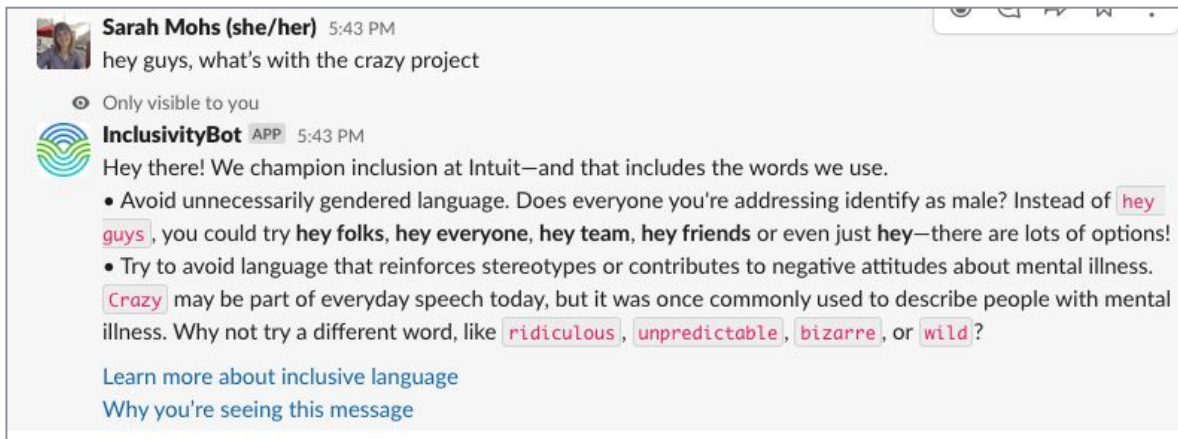
**Sarah Mohs (she/her)** 5:42 PM  
can you whitelist my master files

Only visible to you

**InclusivityBot** APP 5:42 PM  
Hey there! We champion inclusion at Intuit—and that includes the words we use.

- In some contexts, **master** connotes a hierarchical relationship of control and ownership. In any form, it's connected to the idea of dominance and is a harmful term that comes with a history of oppression. Use another word, such as **main**, **source**, **original**, or **primary**. For verb alternatives, check the thesaurus.
- The term **whitelist** reinforces the "white is good" and "black is bad" paradigm. Instead, try using an alternative that's appropriate to the context, such as **trust** or **allow** (for verbs) or **allowlist** (for nouns).

[Learn more about inclusive language](#)  
[Why you're seeing this message](#)



**Sarah Mohs (she/her)** 5:43 PM  
hey guys, what's with the crazy project

Only visible to you

**InclusivityBot** APP 5:43 PM  
Hey there! We champion inclusion at Intuit—and that includes the words we use.

- Avoid unnecessarily gendered language. Does everyone you're addressing identify as male? Instead of **hey guys**, you could try **hey folks**, **hey everyone**, **hey team**, **hey friends** or even just **hey**—there are lots of options!
- Try to avoid language that reinforces stereotypes or contributes to negative attitudes about mental illness. **Crazy** may be part of everyday speech today, but it was once commonly used to describe people with mental illness. Why not try a different word, like **ridiculous**, **unpredictable**, **bizarre**, or **wild**?

[Learn more about inclusive language](#)  
[Why you're seeing this message](#)



# Writer

We use **Writer**, an AI language checking tool, to bring our style guide to where writers work.

This tool checks content for Intuit style, but also flags and suggests content improvements regarding family status, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, and race and ethnicity.

Over 340 writers at Intuit are currently using the tool. Checking **1 million words** a week on average.

The screenshot shows the Writer tool interface. The main document area contains the following text:

sometimes it can be difficult to guide yourself through the decision-making process. You can start by asking yourself these questions:

- Is the language working metaphorically?
- If so, what are the implications behind the metaphor? Does it place a positive connotation on whiteness and a negative one on something else (usually blackness)?
- Does the language imply "otherness" and exclusivity?
- Can it be substituted for something clearer or more literal? (The answer is often yes.) Think about what the term actually means and describe that.
- Are there any groups of people who could be harmed by this? Who and how so? Thinking about who is affected deepens your understanding of anti-racism.
- Does the language make you uncomfortable, even if you can't quite articulate the reason?

Below the list, the text reads: "These are terms with racist roots that we don't use at Intuit. This list is evolving and by no means exhaustive:"

- black hat (hacking)
- blacklist
- black box
- dark UX
- fieldworker
- grandfathered
- master
- master/slave
- redline, redlining
- white glove
- white hat (hacking)

The right sidebar shows a "Suggestions" panel with 20 suggestions. The "Suggestions" list includes:

- Determining Use a simpler word
- judgement Correct spelling
- be substituted Use active voice
- (The ans... Standardize punctuation
- actually Use confident language
- be harmed Use active voice
- is affected deep... Use active voice
- DON'T USE TERM**  
**black hat**  
This term enforces the "white is good" and "black is bad" paradigm. Don't use it. Try unethical hacker/hacking instead.
- blacklist Don't use this term
- black box Don't use this term
- dark UX Don't use this term

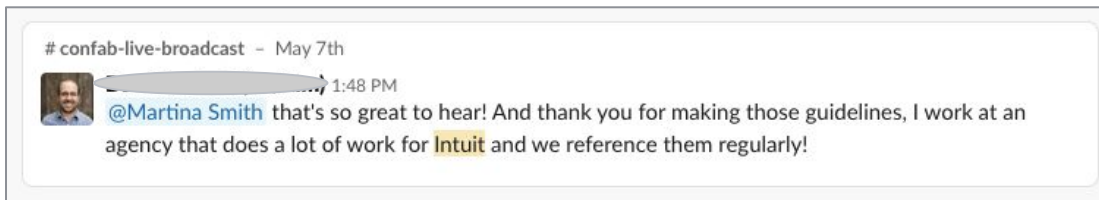
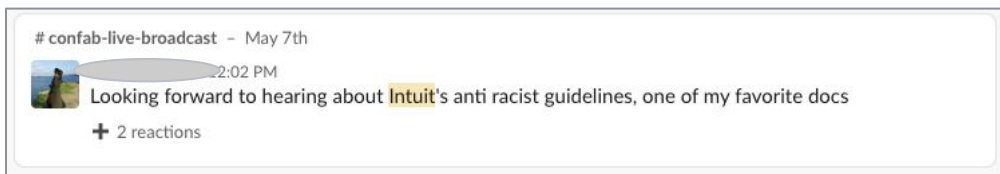
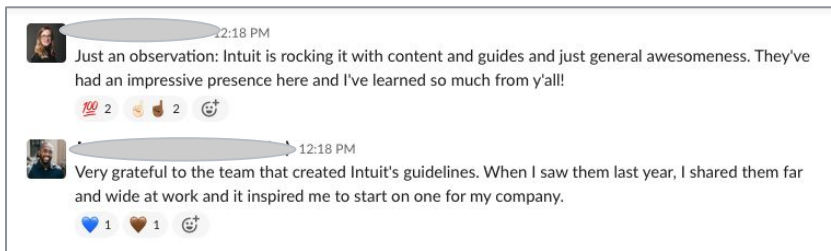
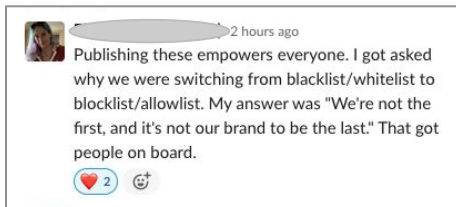
The "Suggestions" panel also includes a "Word count" section showing 197 words.

# Beyond Intuit

Constructive noise from Intuit folks helped **Aha** fast-track changing **master feature name** to **principle feature name**.

An Intuit vendor changed non-inclusive language in their documentation and training after our Legal, Compliance, & Policy org showed them our guidelines.

Content teams across industries have been inspired to create guidelines of their own where they work.



How you can start

# Push for simple, clear content

Point to your voice and tone principles or content design best practices.

There's lots out there.

## Content strategy principles [↗](#)

Our principles guide our content choices. It's how we put the customer first across touchpoints. This gives flexibility for teams to create their own content strategy that ladders up to the one for QuickBooks.

### It's about them, not us

Our focus is always on our customers and what they care about. We don't toot our own horn.

### Focus on the payoff

Any task is hard work when the goal isn't clear. Explain why it matters, not just what needs to be done. A little perseverance upfront lightens the load later on.

### Speak their language

When we talk with our customers, it's a human-to-human conversation. We use everyday words and phrases to earn trust and build confidence.

### Keep it simple

We don't want our customers to get lost in too much content. Make sure all the words you choose are important and necessary.

Don't wait to be assigned something



# Dive in

## **Do your research**

Conduct an internal audit as well as a competitor analysis, listen to customer interviews, read through feedback reports and surveys, and talk to people.

## **Start small and ask for help**

Reach out to dev, connect with product, web, customer success, and localization partners. And don't forget legal!

## **Share and seek team feedback**

Present the work to your teams to inform and ask for help with implementation.

## **Make sweeping updates**

Partner with the right people to make updates. Provide dev with as much documentation as possible for product changes.

# Stay true to your values

There will be people who don't agree with you.

Keep going.

This takes time





# Q&A

