



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Brand Research Language

In 2017, Y-USA's Brand 2.0 research revealed that talking about the Y as a "leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community" resonated more with audiences than describing the Y as a cause. We encourage review of the [Brand Messaging Guide](#) for additional detail on how to leverage these consumer insights in conjunction with the McKinsey & Co. recommendations that were part of the Business Model Innovation Project.



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CAUSE-DRIVEN TOUR LANGUAGE






Words matter, especially when it comes to helping prospective members gain a positive first impression of the Y. Using cause-driven language helps us do this. Cause-driven language consists of terms and phrases we use that reflect the Y's cause. It helps us be intentional when speaking to others about the Y and brings the attributes of our brand – welcoming, nurturing, genuine, determined, hopeful – to life. Some of these terms and phrases are common, everyday words we've used and heard before. But when we use them in the Y, they take on a special meaning.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE:


Review this sheet as you practice and prepare to give a cause-driven tour and while viewing the **Giving a Cause-Driven Tour** video.

The list below is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of language you might use during a cause-driven tour, but it is a good start. Your Y may use specific language that supports our cause and demonstrates how your Y is meeting the specific needs of the community it serves. We encourage you to add those phrases to this list.









WHO WE ARE

We say this		Not this	Why
OUR CAUSE How would I use this in a tour? "Would you like to join our cause?"		"gym" "swim and gym" "health club"	When we say "our cause," it lets people know we've made a promise to them and their community and that we are more than just a provider of programs and services. "Our cause" explains what we stand for as an organization and why people should care..
CHARITABLE and/or FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE How would I use this in a tour? "The YMCA is a charitable organization." "We offer financial assistance to those who cannot afford membership."		"not-for-profit" "company" "business" "gym" "health club"	When people give money to the YMCA it is tax deductible because of our charitable status with the government. We want more people to know the YMCA is a charity and worthy of their donation.
FOR ALL How would I use this in a tour? "The last two words of our mission statement are 'for all.' Everyone is welcome at the Y, regardless of age, income or background, and has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive."		"diverse population" "only for Christians" "Christian organization" "those who cannot afford to pay"	The Y welcomes all people to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. In fact, financial assistance is offered to individuals and families who cannot afford membership.
COMMUNITY How would I use this in a tour? "When you are a member of the Y, you are a part of a community that transforms lives." "Community lives in our group exercise classes. It is where people become friends and celebrate each other."		"gym"	At the Y, we believe we have something special—a sense of community—that brings people together and connect people of all ages and backgrounds.
DONORS How would I use this in a tour? Programs like Safety Around Water—which does exactly what it says: teaches kids skills to be safe around water—are available at no cost, thanks to the generosity of our awesome donors." "Every year 150 children who would otherwise be unable to participate have an opportunity to experience summer camp because of gifts from our generous donors."		"contributors" "funders"	YMCA programs and services across the U.S.—and around the world—are made possible by generous donors and we want more people to see the YMCA as a charity of choice.

WHAT WE DO

We say this		Not this	Why
TRANSFORM LIVES How would I use this in a tour? "You are now part of a community that helps transform lives." "People are transformed by the work of the Y."		"help people change" "prescribe" "get people to lose weight" "sign up for our programs" "gym membership"	Our work does not begin and end with people signing up for and completing a Y program. The Y provides support and opportunities that empower people and communities to learn, grow and thrive. Individuals are transformed through opportunities and experiences in the Y that nurture the potential of children, improve the nation's health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors.

WHAT WE DO (CONTINUED)

We say this	Not this	Why
GOALS How would I use this in a tour? “I know that we can and will work towards those goals together.” “We are here to help you reach your goals.” 	“lose weight” “train”	Members join the Y for “me reasons” that include the goals they hope to achieve in their life (e.g., make friends, spend more time together as a family, improve health). Our role is to discover their goals, big and small, and to support them in their journey.
SUPPORT and/or PATH TO YOUR BEST SELF How would I use this in tour? “We’re here to support you in reaching your goals.” “We want to be with you as you journey on the path to your best self.” 	“lead members” “tell”	Supporting members can take on many different forms. At a minimum, to support members means that we create a welcoming environment, free of judgment and intimidation, and we connect members to other members, staff and opportunities to help members reach their goals.
CONNECT How would I use this in a tour? “Let me connect you with Pamela. Pamela’s an early riser, too, and likes the 6AM yoga class with Scott.” 		The Y brings people together. We look for opportunities to introduce members to other members and staff, and opportunities to help members reach their goals. As staff, we also engage members to deepen our connection to them.
FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES and/or SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY How would I use this in tour? “Parent-child swim lessons are one of the many family opportunities we have.” “Safe and nurturing child watch is available to support your family while you are here.” 	“free child care while you work out”	The Y offers healthy opportunities for families to come together in a safe place.
LEADERS How would I use this in tour? “Another program gives high school students free swim lessons, lifeguard certification and employment. These kids not only become lifeguards, they become leaders.” “We have a CIT—or counselors in training—program that gives pre-teens opportunities to be leaders and prepare for job possibilities in the Y.” 	“teen programs” “keeping teens off the street”	Our programs provide unique opportunities, puts caring people in children’s lives and nurtures them along their journey to adulthood, so they can become active, thriving and contributing members of society.
HEALTHY HABITS How would I use this in tour? “We have a number of different programs to help you and your family build healthy habits.” 	“get buff” “get that beach body” “summer ready” “lose weight”	At the Y, we support members in building sustainable changes that help them reach their goals and improve their health. We recognize that each person has a unique journey to building healthy habits and we strive to support them where they are in ways that are most meaningful to members.
GROUP EXERCISE How would I use this in tour? “This is a group exercise class where community is built among participants.” 	“aerobics” “fitness classes”	Most YMCAs offer exercise classes designed to support groups of members, e.g. group cycling, Pilates, Zumba, etc. During these classes, members do more than exercise together. They support each other, build relationships and form communities. Group exercise instructors help these things happen.
WELLNESS COACH How would I use this in tour? “Now, you will see this equipment—rowers, ellipticals, bikes, weights— in other fitness centers. But what makes them different here? Here, these machines are simply tools. Tools that your wellness coach will use in helping you achieve your goals, big and small.” 	“personal trainer” “fitness instructor”	At the Y, we enhance the quality of life in our community by helping individuals, kids and families improve their health and well-being. We give people the resources and support they need, whether their goal is to maintain wellness, reduce the risk of chronic disease or reclaim good health, and so it is important that we use the term ‘wellness’ to best communicate our role.

USE THE GRID BELOW TO ADD PHRASES AND TERMINOLOGY SPECIFIC TO YOUR YMCA.

For Example

“Bundle of magnificence”

At the YMCA of Louisville, they believe that every person that walks into their doors are “bundles of magnificence.” This term is commonly used language amongst staff and volunteers.

At your Y, you say this	Not this	Why