

# Trigger warning guidance and sample wording

For productions working with sensitive content it's good practice to issue trigger warnings to the crew and cast before working with potentially disturbing themes. Triggering content might include graphic references, for example, to topics such as self-harm, sexual abuse, suicide and violence.

Trigger warnings are used to safeguard individuals who may have experienced a traumatic event in their life from being exposed to potentially triggering material in the workplace i.e., content that may cause significant distress.

People working on a production dealing with potentially traumatising material, should be provided with a trigger warning to allow them to prepare emotionally, or to decide to forgo interacting with the content all together.

The goal is to prevent exposing individuals who have experienced past trauma to any further distress.

## When to use a trigger warning

**1. When discussing a job** – if the subject matter contains triggering content, make this clear at the job interview. Let people know that the content will deal with sensitive, potentially triggering themes. Give them information at an early stage so they can make an informed choice about their involvement. For example: *'this production contains material of a highly sensitive nature including 'x,y,z' that may be triggering for some individuals.'*



They may feel uncomfortable discussing any issues with the material at interview stage for fear of losing out on the job, so it's helpful to mention this again at induction, to give them another opportunity to raise any issues.

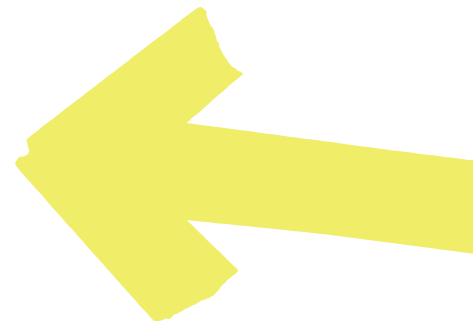
**2. In production and post-production meetings** – explain that some of the content includes subject matter that some crew may find upsetting and/or traumatising. Encourage the crew to look out for each other and foster an atmosphere of sensitivity and mutual respect.

Often, the post-production team are overlooked when considering the effect of sensitive content. In reality, they can be exposed to viewing distressing material multiple times in an edit, so it's vital that they are properly briefed and made aware. Make sure the crew know what psychological support is available.

### Examples of triggers

Triggers warnings are provided as a written or verbal list of contents that may have a negative impact on an individual. Here are several, but this list is not exhaustive:

- Sexual assault
- Abuse
- Child abuse/paedophilia/incest
- Animal cruelty or animal death
- Self-harm
- Suicide
- Eating disorders, body hatred, and fat phobia
- Violence
- Pornographic content
- Kidnapping and abduction
- Death or dying
- Pregnancy/childbirth
- Miscarriages/abortion
- Blood
- Mental illness and ableism
- Racism and racial slurs
- Sexism and misogyny
- Classism
- Torture
- Islamophobia and anti-Semitism
- Hateful language directed at religious groups
- Transphobia and transmisogyny
- Homophobia and heterosexism



## Why warnings are important

While some of these appear obvious as to how they can trigger negative memories in people, others may seem obscure in how they can cause harm. We can never make assumptions about what people have been through in their lives and what might trigger one individual may have no impact on another. The aim is to make people aware and enable them to make an informed choice about whether to work with or view the material.

## How to use trigger warnings

Here are some ways to implement trigger warnings, as well as sample wording:

- **Blanket warnings** – if most of the material is potentially triggering, include a blanket warning that is sent to the crew and perhaps included in their contract. For example:  
*‘the content of this production may be emotionally challenging. The production will aim to let you know in advance when potentially triggering material will be being filmed or discussed.’*
- **In conversation** – if you are about to discuss something sensitive and potentially traumatic, offer a trigger warning in advance. Be clear what you wish to discuss and check-in that the person you are speaking with is ok to continue the conversation.
- **In emails** – you should indicate if there is potentially triggering content in an email or attachment (e.g. script extracts). Place the trigger warning - ‘x,y,z’ in the subject line so that the addressee knows what to expect.
- **On sides** – note before the content ‘Trigger warning - this page contains references to themes of x,y,z... which some individuals may find distressing.’
- **On call-sheets** – Insert a trigger warning next to the scene number to forewarn the crew when a scene with potentially distressing content will be filmed. Try to give your crew as much advance notice as possible.

## Part of wider wellbeing

Taking a few minutes to insert a trigger warning demonstrates that there is an active commitment to supporting mental health and wellbeing in the production.

