

GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

OFFICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES & IDENTITY PROGRAMS

What is gender inclusive language?

Gender Inclusive Language is written, oral and visual communication that does not exclude or demean any particular gender identity.

What is exclusionary language?

Exclusionary language is language that expresses bias in favor of one sex and thus discriminates against other gender identities. Language that discriminates against a gender identity by not adequately reflecting their role, status and presence in society is exclusionary.

What is the difference between inclusive vs neutral language?

The definition of neutral is a position of disengagement, not engaging or not aligned with or supporting any side or position. Whereas the definition of inclusive is to include a great deal, or encompassing everything concern, comprehensive. Many people use neutral and inclusive interchangeably, however, there is a difference in being neutral vs being inclusive. Inclusion focuses on affirming all identities rather than not taking a position. It is LGBTQ+ Initiatives philosophy to center inclusion and therefore utilize gender inclusive language. It is our recommendation to utilize gender inclusive language rather than gender neutral language.

Why use gender inclusive language?

Utilizing gender inclusive language demonstrates that you respect for individuals who identify on the gender expansive spectrum and starts to address prejudice and discrimination.

What are gender inclusive pronouns?

Gender Inclusive Pronouns are pronouns that are not specifically gendered and can be utilized when referring to each other in the third person.

| GENDER INCLUSIVE PRONOUNS | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Subjective | Objective | Possessive | Reflective |
| She | Her | Hers | Herself |
| He | Him | His | Himself |
| They | Them | Theirs | Themselves |
| Ze/Zie | Hir | Hirs | Hirself |
| Xe | Xem | Xyrs | Xemself |
| Ver | Vir | Vis | Virself |
| Per | Per | Pers | Perself |
| E/Ey | Em | Eirs | Eirself |
| Fae | Faer | Faers | Faerself |
| Ae | Aer | Aers | Aerself |
| Elle | Elles | Se | |

Example Sentences:

They (subject): They love coffee!

Zim (object): I asked zim to meet me in the library.

Xyrs (possessive adjective): I read xyrs book in my composition class.

Perself (reflexive): Per taught perselves to play the guitar.

Name Tags:

When creating name tags, encourage folx to write their pronouns as well as their name if they are comfortable. This automatically creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for all people.

What are gender inclusive nouns and phrases that are commonly used?

In order to be more inclusive, LGBTQ+ Initiatives encourages the use of gender inclusive language. Gender inclusive language helps to eliminate assumptions about an individual's gender identity or sexual orientation based on how you perceive the individual or their appearance. Below is a list of nouns/phrases that are commonly used that can be restated in gender inclusive terms:

| GENDER INCLUSIVE NOUNS/PHRASES | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Use... | Instead of... |
| First year | Freshman |
| First year/Sophomores | Lowerclassmen |
| Juniors/Seniors | Upperclassmen |
| Parent/Guardian | Mother/Father |
| Child | Daughter/Son |
| Sibling | Sister/Brother |
| Nibling | Niece/Nephew |
| Folx/Friends | Guys |
| Best person for the job | Best man for the job |
| Partners | Wife/Husband |
| People | Man (all people) |
| Staffing the table | Manning the table |
| Everybody | Ladies/Gentlemen |

Information adapted from the American Psychological Association, University of Pittsburgh's Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies Program, & Australian National University.



Contact Information:

Kolligian Library 167 | socialjustice@ucmerced.edu | [@ucmsocialjustice](https://www.ucmerced.edu/socialjustice)

UNDERSTANDING PRONOUNS

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How to utilize pronouns:

Pronouns are integral to who we are, and we share pronouns because we want to avoid assuming someone's pronouns based on factors like appearance. By sharing our own pronouns routinely, we encourage others to do the same and demonstrate that we understand the importance of sharing pronouns. Using someone's correct pronouns is an important way of affirming someone's identity and is a fundamental step in being an ally.

Common pronouns include she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. There are other nonbinary pronouns. It is important to ask people what their pronouns are. If you have questions, politely ask the person to give examples of how to use the pronouns.

They/Them/Theirs

While we might typically think of "they/them/theirs" as a plural pronoun, we actually use they to refer to an individual all the time without realizing it. When we refer to a person whose gender we do not know, we might use they as the pronoun.

"I got a call from the doctor today."

"What did they say?"

(In this example, "they" is used as a pronoun to refer to an individual.)

Sharing Your Pronouns

Make a habit of introducing yourself with your pronouns, not just in LGBTQIA-specific situations. This makes sharing pronouns routine, instead of singling out certain people or communities.

"Hi, my name is Hanna and my pronouns are she/her/hers."

Asking Someone Their Pronouns

Here are some respectful ways to ask someone their pronouns.

"What pronouns do you use?"

"May I ask what pronouns you use?"

"When I refer to you, what pronouns should I use?"

"Are you comfortable sharing your pronouns?" (to make sure we are not pressuring people to "out" themselves)

Try to avoid using the phrases "preferred pronouns" or "preferred name" as these suggest an element of flexibility or that someone's identity is less than valid. Someone's name and pronouns are not suggestions and are not preferred over something else. They are inherent to who we are.

Keep in mind some people may use certain pronouns in some contexts and not in others due to a variety of factors, including safety. Some people use different names and different pronouns depending on the context. It can be helpful to clarify in what situations someone uses certain pronouns. Remember it is up to each person how and when they choose to share part of their identity with others.

Why can't I just assume someone's pronouns by looking at them?

By assuming someone's pronouns based on how they look, one is implicitly reinforcing harmful stereotypes about gender expression. For example, that masculine-looking people always use he/him/his pronouns. This is not always the case, and it is important to understand and respect each individual's identity. This is why we want to ask, not assume, someone's pronouns and make a habit of introducing ourselves with our pronouns.

What are some other ways to make sharing pronouns a regular part of our work space?

At the start of work meetings, make it a habit to go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves and their pronouns if they feel comfortable. One can emphasize that sharing pronouns is an important part of respecting each person's identity and is part of creating an inclusive space.

Adding pronouns to your email signature and business cards are an important way to show you understand the importance of pronouns. Here are some examples:

Dan Alvarez
They/Them/Theirs
Administrator

What if I make a mistake and use the wrong pronouns?

While we want to do our best to use someone's correct pronouns, mistakes can happen. If this does happen, it is best to apologize, say what pronoun you meant to use, and move on without dwelling on the mistake. Overly apologizing may put the other person (the person who was just misgendered) in an uncomfortable position. Some people in this position might feel pressured to say, "It's ok" even though it's not - using the wrong pronouns can be incredibly harmful. If a mistake happens, apologize, correct yourself, and move on.

"She- I'm sorry, I meant to say 'He got the files from the office.'"

Adapted from MyPronouns.org and the Trans* Ally Workbook by Davey Shlasko.

