

Pronouns - a quick guide



What are pronouns?

Pronouns are the words you may like others to use for you in place of your name. Some examples include “she/her” or “he/him” or gender-neutral pronouns, such as “ze/hir,” [pronounced: zee/heer] or “they/them”.

Why focus on pronouns?

You may have noticed that people are sharing their pronouns in introductions, on name tags, and at the beginning of meetings. This gives everyone in the room the opportunity to self-identify instead of others assuming their identity or which pronouns they use. It’s a first step toward respecting people’s identity and creating a more welcoming space for people of all genders.

How is this more inclusive?

By providing an opportunity for people to share their pronouns, you’re showing that you’re not assuming what their gender identity is based on their appearance or assumptions.

What if I don’t want to share my pronouns?

That’s ok! Providing space and opportunity for people to share their pronouns does not mean that everyone feels comfortable or needs to share their pronouns.

Mistakes and misgendering

Misgendering refers to the experience of being labelled by others as a gender other than the one you identify with.

Using the wrong pronouns (intentionally or unintentionally) is a form of misgendering.

If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun when identifying someone, apologise or say “thank you”, and immediately use the right pronoun.

For example:

You introduce your student, Alex. *“This is Alex, she is one of my science students.”*

You are corrected because Alex uses they/them/theirs pronouns. *“Sorry, they are one of my science students.”*, or *“Thank you, they are one of my science students.”*

Everyone makes mistakes

If you make a mistake, take accountability and move on, using the correct pronoun.

The important thing to be mindful of is to not unload your guilty feelings on transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming (GNC) people or expect forgiveness.

They might have a strong reaction to the misuse of their pronouns and need space to recentre themselves.

Make your support visible!

- **Add your pronouns to your email signature.** You could also link the word “pronouns” to the [Supporting our LGBTIQ+ Community/Pronouns page on the Digital Workplace](#)
- **Include pronouns on nametags and when introducing yourself.** This gives other participants the opportunity to make their pronouns visible.



Tips for gender-neutral Language:

- Practice, practice, practice! Use gender-neutral pronouns such as “they” and “ze” while visualizing the person who uses them. This is especially useful to do right before you’re about to see the person.
- Whenever possible, take the lead from the transgender, nonbinary, and GNC people in our community.
- When addressing groups of people or people whose pronouns you don’t know, use gender-neutral language such as, “students”, “friends”, “folks,” or “all,” rather than “guys,” “ladies,” “ma’am,” or “sir.”
- Use descriptive language to let someone who you are talking about, such as “Can you give this to the person in row two with the white t-shirt and red hair?”

Resources to help

Working with Diversity - A guide to inclusive language at QUT. You can download a copy of this resource from the [Supporting our LGBTIQ+ Community page on the Digital Workplace](#)

Minus 18's pronoun tool can help you practise: pronouns.minus18.org.au