

Pronouns

Guide



The University has provided a quick guide on using pronouns; why we need them; when can we use them; commonly used pronouns; some useful tips and a link to further guidance.

Using pronouns correctly

When it comes to using pronouns, often people tend to think that **"he/him"** refers to a **male / man / boy**, and **"she/her"** refers to a **female / woman / girl**, as these pronouns are gendered in the English language.

Gender neutral or gender inclusive pronouns (e.g. **they/them/theirs**) refer to pronouns that do not associate the individual with a gender of either male or female.

Why do we need them?

People tend to make assumptions about someone's gender based on their appearance, voice or characteristics. However, these assumptions are not always correct.

Using the correct pronouns for someone is a basic sign of respect, so it is important to note what pronouns a person goes by.

Some non-binary people go by gender-neutral pronouns such as **"they/them"**, but there are also non-binary people who go by **"she/her"** or **"he/him"**.

Some people go by more than one set of pronouns, e.g. a person might go by both **"she/her"** and **"they/them"**.

Commonly used pronouns

He/Him/His/Himself

She/Her/Hers/Herself

They/Them/Theirs/Themself

There is an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language, however, when you do not yet know which pronouns someone goes by, it is generally a good idea to use **"they/them"**.

Avoid using the phrase **"preferred pronouns"** due to people generally not having a pronoun **"preference"** but simply having **"pronouns."** Using **"preferred"** can accidentally insinuate that using the correct pronouns for someone is optional.

Pronouns

Examples

When can we use them?

If you are happy to do so, you could introduce yourself with your pronouns: **"Hi, my name is Catherine and my pronouns are she/her."**

Try introducing your colleagues in such a way that makes their pronouns clear, e.g. **"This is Bob; he works in the School of Nursing"** or **"This is Martina; they're new to Ulster."**

Instead of using s/he in recruitment documentation and in policies, use gender neutral pronouns e.g. they / you.

Include your pronouns in your **email signature**.

Doing this can indicate that you are an ally to people who are non-binary or transgender.

Useful tips...

We all make mistakes! You don't have to make a big deal out of using the wrong pronouns. You just need to apologise, fix it and move on quickly. Drawing a lot of attention at the time is not helpful and could potentially be harmful to the person.

Do not be afraid to ask! If you are not sure what pronouns to use for someone, it is okay to ask, but do make sure to share your own too, e.g. **"My pronouns are she/her, by the way. What pronouns do you go by?"**

Inclusive language - To continue to build a culture which is inclusive of all genders, you should avoid wording that assumes there are only two genders, e.g.

- Instead of **"ladies and gentlemen"**, say **"everybody"**, **"colleagues"**, or **"friends and guests"**.
- Instead of **"he/she"** (when referring to someone unknown or a universal person), use **"they"** or **"the person"**.
- Instead of **"men and women"**, say **"people"**.

Further information about pronouns is available at the MyPronouns.org website.



Alex Smith

Pronouns I use: She/Her/Hers/Herself

[Job Title]

T: [Phone number]

E: [Email address] **W:** www.ulster.ac.uk

Social: [Social media link (optional)]



Alex Smith

Pronouns I use: She/Her/They/Them

[Job Title]

T: [Phone number]

E: [Email address] **W:** www.ulster.ac.uk

Social: [Social media link (optional)]



Don Smith

Pronouns I use: He/Him/His/Himself

[Job Title]

T: [Phone number]

E: [Email address] **W:** www.ulster.ac.uk

Social: [Social media link (optional)]



Charlie Smith

Pronouns I use: They/Them/Theirs/Themselves

[Job Title]

T: [Phone number]

E: [Email address] **W:** www.ulster.ac.uk

Social: [Social media link (optional)]



Don Smith

Pronouns I use: He/Him/They/Them

[Job Title]

T: [Phone number]

E: [Email address] **W:** www.ulster.ac.uk

Social: [Social media link (optional)]