

LET'S TALK ABOUT

Gender and Pronouns

LANGUAGE MATTERS

Attending to language is one of the most straightforward ways to create learning and working environments that are safe, inclusive, and respectful to all. Using language that affirms people's identities helps to ensure everyone can participate fully in MacEwan life.

Names often have gendered expectations attached to them. Because of this, many trans and non-binary people choose a name that they wish to be called instead of the name given to them at birth. Legal name changes are expensive and complicated, so not everyone goes through that process. Honouring a person's chosen name is one way to affirm their identity and show support.



Information on recommended pronoun use in academic writing is available from Writing and Learning Services.

WritingCentre@MacEwan.ca

PRONOUNS AND THEIR USES

Pronouns are one important way to communicate a person's gender. Using appropriate pronouns shows respect and acknowledgement of their gender and identity.

Here are some examples of pronouns that people use:

Nominative	Objective	Possessive Determiner	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
He	Him	His	His	Himself
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves
Ze/Zie	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself
Xe	Xem	Xyr	Xyrs	Xemself
Ve	Ver	Vis	Vis	Verself

THE SINGULAR "THEY"

The singular "they" has existed in the English language since the 16th century. It is most often used when the speaker is unsure of the gender of the person to whom they are referring. For example:

"Looks like someone forgot their coat. I hope they return to retrieve it soon. They're going to be cold without it."

If you know a person's pronouns, use those. If you are unsure, or they have stated that their pronouns are they/them, the singular they is the best pronoun to use.

Faculty are encouraged to include a statement about pronouns in their course syllabi. Here is an example of a statement that you can use:

MacEwan University is committed to the principles of diversity, equity, and human rights. In this classroom, we respect and refer to people using the names and personal pronouns that they choose to share. This includes in assignments, classroom discussions, and academic writing. If you have a chosen name that is different than the one identified in the class roster, please contact your instructor.



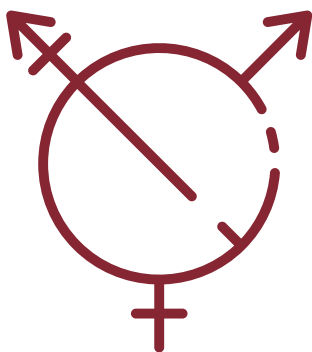
No reasonable reader today would be confused by an appropriate and contextually clear use of the gender-neutral singular they, and it's now acceptable to use in both informal and formal writing contexts.

MacEwan Writing and Learning Services

NORMALIZE INTRODUCTIONS WITH PRONOUNS

"Hello, my name is Shae. My pronouns are she/her and they/them."

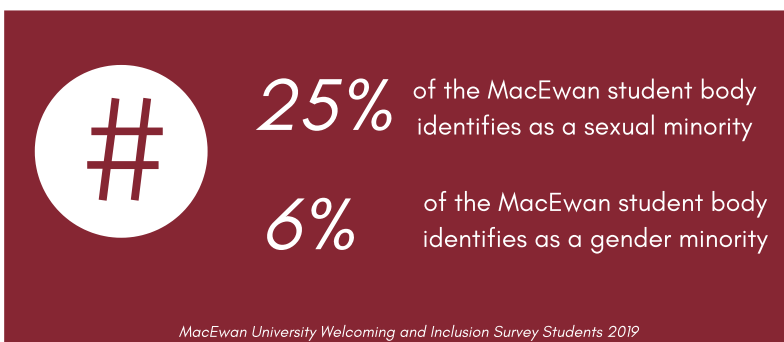
A person's gender is not always evident when they introduce themselves. Making pronoun declarations a normal part of introductions not only shows support for trans and non-binary folks, it also means that people won't be forced to clarify their gender later on. By starting introductions with pronouns, no one will feel "othered" when stating their own. The goal is to make this part of your everyday conversations. Some people also include their pronouns in their email signatures as a way to signal support for diverse gender identities.



The honorifics of Mr., Mrs., Miss, and Ms. come with specific gender expectations. Consider using **Mx** (usually pronounced /mɪks/ MIKS or /mʌks/ MUKS and sometimes /ɛm'ɛks/ em-EKS) as a gender-neutral alternative.

AVOIDING HETERONORMATIVE LANGUAGE

Heteronormativity is the belief that people fall into distinct and complementary genders (man and woman) with natural roles in life and that heterosexuality is the only or preferred sexual orientation. This marginalizes everything outside of the ideals of heterosexuality, monogamy, and gender conformity. Heteronormative assumptions are frequently communicated through the everyday language we use. Being intentional with our word choices allows us to break free from rigid or binary assumptions and creates a more open and inclusive environment.



INSTEAD OF	TRY
Men & Women, Ladies & Gentlemen, Guys	Everyone, Folks, Friends, People, Students, Co-workers, Peers
Boyfriend/Girlfriend, Husband/Wife	Partner, Significant Other, Date, Crush, Sweetheart
Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend? Are you married?	Are you seeing anyone? Do you have a partner? Are you in a relationship?
Mother/Father, Mom/Dad	Parents, Guardians, Family Members, Caretakers

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

There is a growing body of research that reinforces the importance of using people's correct pronouns. Students have reported when faculty use their pronouns and chosen name correctly they feel that faculty are more supportive of their success. Supportive staff and faculty provide a sense of relief during the challenges of post-secondary education. Conversely, misgendering people leads to feelings of emotional exhaustion, lower self-esteem, anger, distress, and feeling invalidated. Appropriate pronoun usage can help to ensure student success and also promotes an inclusive and affirming learning environment.

Pronouns slips and accidental misgendering are bound to happen on occasion. If you find yourself in this situation, you can follow these simple steps:

1. Apologize
2. Use the correct name or pronoun
3. Do better next time

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BASIC TERMS

Sex: Categories (male, female, intersex) to which people are typically assigned at birth and may appear on proof of identity documents, unless a person has documentation changed.

Gender: Social and cultural expectations of roles and presentation. Historically, these expectations have fallen inside the male/female binary.

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of their gender. For example, a person may identify as transgender, genderqueer, non-binary, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

Gender Expression: External and public presentation of a person's gender expressed through one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behaviour, voice, or body characteristics. Pronouns are one way that gender can be communicated to others.

Misgendering: Attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect/does not align with their gender identity. Can occur when using pronouns, gendered language (i.e., "Hello ladies! "Hey guys"), or assigning genders to people without knowing how they identify (i.e., "Well, since we're all women in this room, we understand...").

Sexual and Gender Diversity: The orientations and identities that exist outside of the cisgender binary and heterosexuality.

Cisgender: An individual whose gender identity society deems to match the person's sex that was assigned at birth. (i.e., People who are not trans).

Transgender/Trans/Trans-Identified: Umbrella terms used to refer to individuals whose gender identity or expression differs from the sex or gender assigned to them at birth.

Sexual Orientation: Feelings of attraction, behaviour, intimacy, or identification that direct people towards intimacy with others.

THE MACEWAN CENTRE FOR SEXUAL & GENDER DIVERSITY

The MacEwan Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity serves as a dynamic interdisciplinary hub designed to foster community-engaged research, teaching, and an inclusive learning environment in support of sexual and gender minorities. The Centre supports the development of inclusive and responsive policies, evidence-informed practices, and encourages the full and equitable participation of sexual and gender minorities on campus and in society.

Let us help you!

- PD Workshops
- Policy Review & Analysis
- Resources
- Community Connections
- Current Research
- Support for Equity & Inclusion
- MacEwan Pride Week



October 21st is
International Pronouns Day!

Find out more at
www.pronounsday.org

Want to know more? Check out
MyPronouns.org