



LMU

**D & I QUICK TIPS**

USEFUL REFERENCES IN THE PROMOTION  
OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

**GENDER PRONOUNS**

**Language is  
a social  
construct...**

**just like  
gender.**

# Gender Pronouns

It is important to be sensitive to different identities that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories.

## THE MEANING OF GENDER HAS CHANGED

Historically, gender has followed a male/female dichotomy. Typically used interchangeably with sex (the designation of one's chromosomal and anatomical make-up), **gender** refers to socially-determined characteristics of particular types of behavior, interests, and expectations. **Gender roles** vary from society to society, but are typically decided based on the anatomical sex of individuals. As society progresses, however, many people re-conceptualize what it means to be men or women, and question whether these **gender identities** remain relevant to individual experiences.

## WHY WE SPECIFY PRONOUNS

When individuals or groups do not adhere to established gender norms, they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion – all of which adversely affect health. It is **important to be sensitive to different identities** that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories.

The use of pronouns in daily conversation is a pervasive way to either enforce or challenge **cisnormativity**, which is the assumption that people are either male or female and cisgender identification is superior to other forms of self-concept. Introducing yourself with pronouns or adding them to your professional signatures creates a **culture of acceptance** for those who do not use cisgender pronouns (he/him/his or she/her/hers). Even if you are cisgender, using your pronouns sends the message that you support an inclusive environment and that it is safe for everyone to use theirs.

## Using Pronouns to Promote Inclusivity

### NORMALIZE DECLARATION OF PRONOUNS

- Consider specifying your pronouns in emails, name tags, business cards, and when introducing yourself.
- Use as part of introductory activities (e.g. icebreakers).
- Practice using “they, them, and theirs” as pronouns.

### RECOGNIZE PRIVILEGE

- Understand that the world caters to the gender binary and do your best to be more inclusive.
- Notice gender specific language – use of terms like “partner” instead of wife or husband, discussing concepts in gender-neutral terms, etc.,
- Don't assume the gender or sexual orientation of others

### RESPECT OTHERS

- Ask pronouns in respectful ways, and use them.
- When you make a mistake, correct it and then move on—avoid over-apologizing.
- Validate others' identities even if you don't agree with them.

### ASK RESPECTFUL QUESTIONS

- As you seek understanding, be mindful and respect others' boundaries and privacy.
- Know that gender identity is entirely personal and each individual has a unique way to conceptualize what gender means. One person does not speak for the group.
- As you learn more, don't be afraid to apply your new knowledge. Keep practicing.

# LGBTQ+ VOCABULARY

**Gender Transition:** The process taken to more closely align one's internal knowledge of gender with their outward appearance.

- **Social**—dressing differently, using names and pronouns.
- **Physical**—modifying one's body through medical or other inventions (e.g hormones, binding, voice alteration).

**Gender Dysphoria:** Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned sex at birth is not the same as the gender with which they identify.

**Cisgender:** Someone who identifies with the sex assigned to them at birth.

**Transgender:** Living as a member of a gender other than that expected based on sex or gender assigned at birth.

**Gender Void/Non-Conforming/Non-Binary:** Rejection or refusal to present or behave in a gendered way as expected by society

**Agender:** Relating to a person that doesn't identify themselves as having a particular gender.

**Genderfluid:** A person whose gender identity varies over time, depending on varied circumstances.

**Genderqueer:** Having a gender identity that is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders.

**More resources can be found at**

<https://studentaffairs.lmu.edu/community/ethnicandinterculturalservices/lgbtstudentservices/>

Human Rights Campaign (n.d.). [Glossary of Terms](#).



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