

Use of pronouns

Pronouns are used in everyday speech and writing to take the place of people's names. We frequently use them without thinking about it. Often, when speaking of someone in the third person, these pronouns have a gender implied. These associations are not always accurate or helpful.

Mistaking or assuming peoples' pronouns without asking first, mistakes their gender and sends a harmful message. Using someone's correct gender pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their identity. We hope that this information will help increase awareness and empower you to use everyone's correct gender pronouns and strive for a more inclusive environment at the University of Bristol.

What pronouns are

Pronouns are words that refer to either the people talking (such as 'you', 'they' or 'I') or someone or something that is being talked about (such as 'them', 'me' and 'this'). Gender pronouns (such as 'he', 'she' or 'they') specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

Using gender pronouns

People may choose to use a variety of pronouns. Here are some commonly used pronouns and how they are used:

Subject	Object	Possessive	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
He	Him	His	His	Himself
"He studied"	"I called him"	"His pencil"	"That is his"	"He trusts himself"
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
"She studied"	"I called her"	"Her pencil"	"That is hers"	"She trusts herself"
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves
"They studied"	"I called them"	"Their pencil"	"That is theirs"	"They trust themselves"
Ze (or Zie)	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself

"Ze studied" (<i>"zee"</i>)	"I called hir" (<i>"heer"</i>)	"Hir pencil"	"That is hirs"	"Ze trusts himself"
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This is not an exhaustive list. It is good practice to ask which pronouns a person uses.

Why it's important for University staff and students to respect gender pronouns

- An important element of creating a safe space for people of all sexes and gender identities is the respectful use of gender pronouns.
- Asking University community members what their gender pronouns are and consistently using them correctly is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity. This can determine within the first few minutes if they will feel respected at the University or not.
- Discussing and correctly using gender pronouns sets a tone of allyship. It can real difference, especially for new community members that may feel particularly vulnerable in a new environment.
- You can't always know what someone's gender pronoun is by looking at them. When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or hurt.
- Many people may be learning about gender pronouns for the first time, so this will be a learning opportunity for all of us in the Bristol community. You will be setting an example for your colleagues.

How you can be inclusive in using and respecting gender pronouns

You can incorporate gender pronouns in everyday use, with these strategies:

- Edit your email signature to include your pronouns
- Try to get in the habit of using 'they/them' until you know someone's pronouns, for example "There is someone here to see you, I'll ask them to take a seat".
- Listen to how people speak about themselves and follow suit, for example if they say something like "people always say 'she's interesting' when they meet me".
- Verbal introductions and check-ins are great opportunities to solicit gender pronouns. As names and pronouns can change over time, it is preferable to regularly incorporate these questions into meetings and introductions. Asking about a person's pronouns may initially feel awkward or uncomfortable, but it is preferable to making hurtful assumptions and using the wrong pronoun. Here are some ways you can do this:
 - "What pronouns do you use?"
 - "How would you like me to refer to you?"

- "How would you like to be addressed?"
- "Can you remind me which pronouns you like for yourself?"
- "My name is Robert and my pronouns are he, him, and his. What about you?"

If you'd like to learn more visit mypronouns.org.