



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 people's pronouns without asking first, may mistake their gender and send 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 are Pronouns?

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

Using Gender Pronouns

People may choose to use a variety of pronouns. Below is a list of 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/Themselves

"They studied"	"I called them"	"Their pencil"	"That is theirs"	"They trust themselves(themself)"
Ze (or Zie)	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself
"Ze studied" ("zee")	"I called hir" ("heer")	"Hir pencil"	"That is hirs"	"Ze trusts hirself"

This is not an exhaustive list. It is good practice to ask which pronouns a person uses.

Why is it important for UoB staff and students to respect gender pronouns?

- A key element of creating a safe space for people of all sexes and gender identities is the respectful use of gender pronouns.
- Asking UoB 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 UoB or not.
- Discussing and correctly using gender pronouns sets a tone of allyship. It can make a 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 and friends.

How can I 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
 - My [pronouns](#) are she/her
- Try to get in the habit of using 'they/them' until you know someone's pronouns, e.g. "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, e.g. if they say something like "people always say 'she's interesting' when they meet me".
- If you realise you have used the wrong pronouns simply apologise, correct yourself, and move on, e.g. "when I was talking to him about – sorry – when I was talking to her about ...". If you were unable to correct yourself in that moment, apologise in private, and move on. In either case, don't dwell on the mistake – this is likely to make the person *more* uncomfortable.

- If you keep getting someone's pronouns wrong, try practising using the correct pronoun when they are not around.
- 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 <https://www.mypronouns.org/>