

# TRANS INCLUSION IN PRACTICE: ADOPTING GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Language is often unnecessarily gendered, meaning that we use gendered terms even when there are viable gender-neutral alternatives. We often make assumptions about people's gender through the words that we use. Terms like "Sir", "Miss" and "guys" are all examples of gendered language that may not accurately reflect the people we are describing. Adopting gender-neutral language helps us to avoid making assumptions and creates safer spaces for trans and gender diverse communities.

Some trans people do prefer gendered language. Many trans people can be described using gendered terms, but only if those terms are truly reflective of their identity. For example, it is generally accepted to call a trans woman 'miss,' but not to call a trans woman 'sir.' Nonetheless, when dealing with people, whether they are cisgender or transgender, it is important to use gender-neutral language until you are able to ask what their pronouns are.

**HERE ARE SOME STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO CREATE A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE:**

GENDERED TERM	GENDER-NEUTRAL ALTERNATIVE	RATIONALE
Miss, Mister or Sir	Honorifics are often best avoided due to their gendered nature.  However, the pronoun Mx. (pronounced like "mix") is a gender-neutral honorific used by some non-binary and gender diverse people.	If you do not know an individual's gender identity, using a gendered honorific such as Miss, Mister or Sir can inadvertently misgender someone.
Ladies or guys	Folks, people, humans, friends, team, everyone	"Ladies" and "guys" are both often used to refer to groups of individuals, and inadvertently make assumptions about the gender identities of those you are referring to.

GENDERED TERM	GENDER-NEUTRAL ALTERNATIVE	RATIONALE
Boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife	Partner, significant other, spouse	We often assume that individuals are heterosexual, and dating people of the 'opposite' gender. However, use of such gendered terms, without prior consent, erases same-gender relationships, or people in relationships with non-binary individuals.
Brother, sister, etc.	Sibling	Brother and sister are both examples of terms that are appropriate when used accurately, but which, when used incorrectly, may inadvertently misgender trans and non-binary siblings.
Fireman, Chairman, (etc.)	Firefighter, Chairperson, (etc.)	Gendered terms are commonly used to refer to different professions or roles. Using these terms can often result in advertently misgendering people.
Pregnant woman	Pregnant person	People of any and all genders can become pregnant. Many people assume that a pregnant person is a woman, though that is not always the case.
'Female' or 'male' genitalia or reproductive health systems	Use precise anatomical terminology such as vulva, penis, or reproductive organs.  It is always a good idea to ask the client what terms they use to refer to their genitals as sometimes anatomical terms can also create discomfort.	The use of gendered terms like 'male' or 'female' often presents barriers to trans people. For example, many trans men would not see themselves reflected in the term 'female genitalia.'