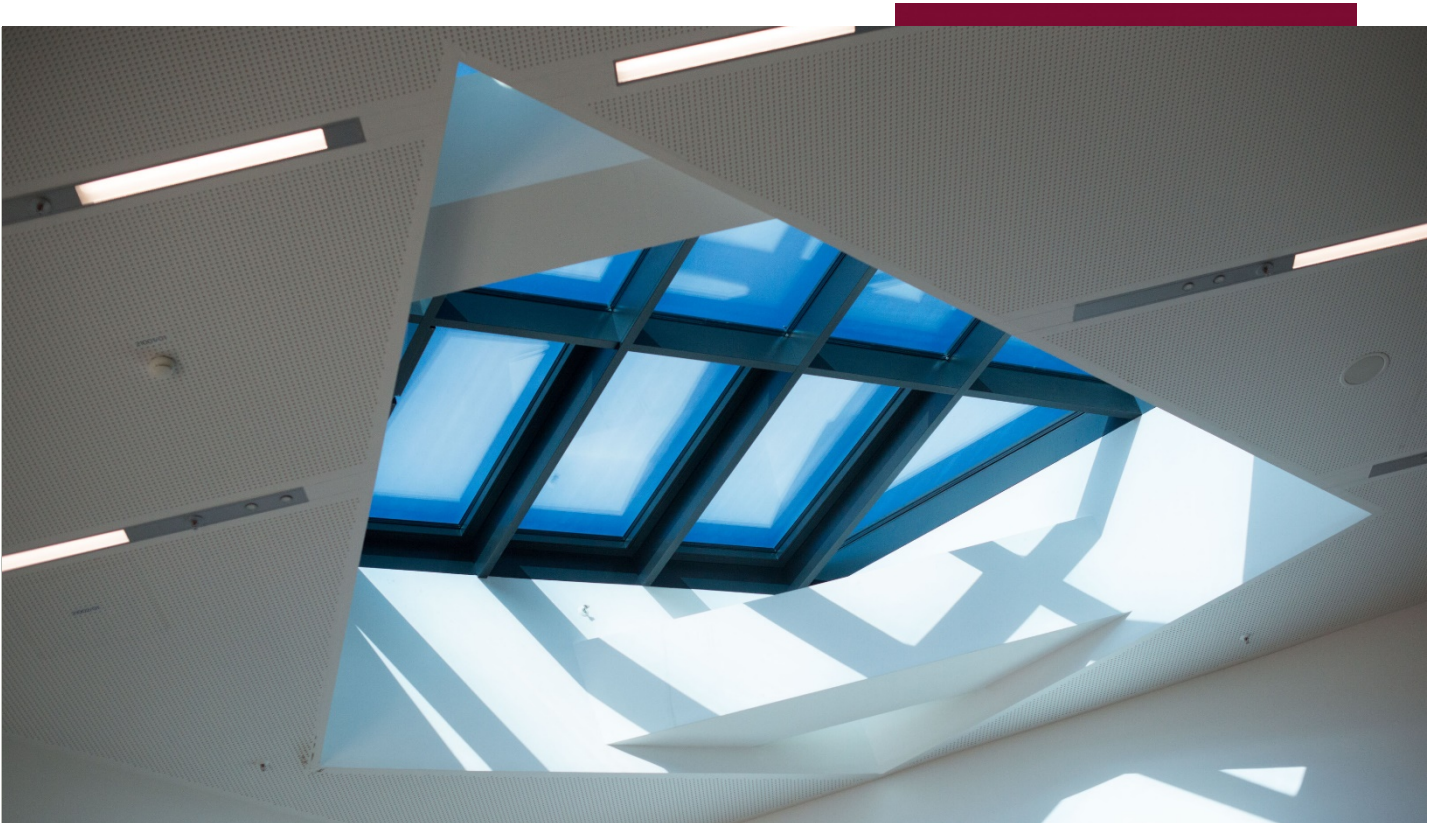


# **GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE** ADVICE & RECOMMENDATIONS



→ OFFICE FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

# INTRODUCTION

Gender-inclusive language is a way of acknowledging and respecting the diversity of bodies and genders. Using gender-inclusive language aims to speak and write in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex or gender identity. Therefore, gender-inclusive language should not only acknowledge that the categories of “women” and “men” are always inclusive of trans people but should also ensure that identities beyond the gender binary are taken into account. Among other measures, gender-inclusive language helps to counteract discrimination against women, trans, inter\* and non-binary people and strives to build a safer, more inclusive environment at Leuphana University. What form of gender-inclusive language should be used is open at Leuphana University, although the use of the asterisk (\*) in German is recommended. There are several ways to signalise inclusiveness when speaking and writing in English, some of which are mentioned below.

# GENDERED NOUNS

The consistent use of masculine words such as ‘he’ and ‘manpower’ can give the impression that women and non-binary identities are excluded from the group to which the writer is referring. To be inclusive, gendered and specifically masculine words should be avoided where they are not referring to gender specifics.

## STRATEGIES

### 1. Changing to gender neutral alternatives

#### Examples:

- Man → *person, individual*
- Mankind → *people, human beings, humanity*
- Freshman → *first-year student*
- Chairman → *chair, chairperson, coordinator, head*
- Spokesman → *spokesperson*

### 2. Use ‘you’ to speak directly to the reader

**Example:** “The student should make sure he or she checks his or her references carefully.” → “*You should make sure you check your references carefully.*”

### 3. Changing the sentence to avoid the need to state a gender

**Example:** “The student should be given sufficient time to analyse the text.” → “*Sufficient time should be allowed for the student to analyse the text.*”

### 4. Use Plural

**Example:** A student who loses too much sleep may have trouble focusing during his or her exams. → *Students who lose too much sleep may have trouble focusing during their exams.*

# PRONOUNS

Standard English imposes a gender requirement on the third-person singular, usually 'she', 'he' or 'they'. The assumption of people's gender based on their name or appearance, and therefore pronouns and other gendered language used for them, can be conceived of as disrespectful and dismissive. Therefore, all correspondence should use non-gendered terminology when referring to a group of individuals or an individual of unspecified gender identity whenever possible. The terms 'he/she' should be replaced by 'they'.

## SINGULAR 'THEY'

When referring to individuals, whose identifying pronouns are not known or when the gender of a person is irrelevant within the context, use the singular 'they' to avoid making assumptions about an individual's gender. Using forms like 'he or she' remains binary and should therefore be superseded by 'they'.

subject	object	possessive adjective	possessive pronoun	reflexive
<i>they</i>	<i>them</i>	<i>their</i>	<i>theirs</i>	<i>themselves</i>

### Examples:

- "There is someone here to see you; I'll ask them to take a seat".
- "I agree with what they just said."

While in the examples above the traditional singular 'they' is used to refer to a person whose gender is not known or is not important in the context, the singular 'they' is also used as a non-binary pronoun by some people who don't identify as either male or female.

**Example:** Max rides their bike to university. They do not like walking because it takes them too long.

# FORMS OF ADDRESS

Instead of ‘Dear Ladies and Gentlemen’, use gender-neutral phrases like ‘Dear all’ or ‘Distinguished Guests’. Phrases like ‘Dear Colleagues’, ‘Welcome, everyone’ or ‘Good morning, folks’ are also good practice examples.

## TITLES

Gendered titles like Mrs or Mr should generally be avoided, whereas titles like PhD, Dr. and Professor are gender-neutral.

## FURTHER ADVICE FOR INCLUSIVE PRONOUN-USAGE

- When introducing yourself, offer your name and pronouns
- Include your pronouns in your email signature and on the class syllabus
- Offer students to self-identify their name and pronouns. The disclosure of name and pronouns shouldn’t be mandatory, but make sure to make space for those who would like to share.
- Only call roll or read the class roster aloud after providing students with an opportunity to share with you the name and pronouns that they use and those they want you to use in the class.
- If a student shares their gender identity or pronouns with you, do not disclose the student’s gender identity or pronouns to others unless you have obtained their consent.
- Do not identify a person’s gender when taking questions. Try to describe them, such as ‘the person in the front with the black shirt. If you know their name, use that instead.

# BINARIES

Avoid referring to one sex or gender as the “opposite sex” or “opposite gender”; appropriate wording may be “another sex” or “another gender.”

# WORKS CONSULTED

- Psychological Association: *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020.
  - Singular 'they': <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/grammar/singular-they>
  - Bias-free Language: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language>
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill/ Writing Center: *Tips & Tools for Gender-inclusive Language*  
<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender-inclusive-language/>
- University of Warwick: *Gender neutral language* (Handout)  
[https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/getinvolved/initiatives/lgbtua/gender\\_neutral\\_language.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/getinvolved/initiatives/lgbtua/gender_neutral_language.pdf)

# FURTHER RESOURCES

- University of Warwick: *Gender-inclusive Teaching: Introduction to Language*  
[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/academy/funding/2016-17fundedprojects/interdisciplinarityprojects/genderinclusiveteaching/introlanguage/](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/academy/funding/2016-17fundedprojects/interdisciplinarityprojects/genderinclusiveteaching/introlanguage/)
- Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD): *GLAAD's Media Reference Guide*  
<https://www.glaad.org/sites/default/files/GLAAD-Media-Reference-Guide-Tenth-Edition.pdf>
- The Vanderbilt University/ English Language Center: *ELC Pronoun Guide*  
<https://ir.vanderbilt.edu/bitstream/handle/1803/9976/VUELC-Pronoun-Guide.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- The Vanderbilt University/ Center for Teaching: *CFT Teaching Guide "Teaching Beyond the Gender Binary in the University Classroom"*  
<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-beyond-the-gender-binary-in-the-university-classroom/>
- Non-binary Wiki: *Gender neutral language in English*  
[https://nonbinary.wiki/wiki/Gender\\_neutral\\_language\\_in\\_English](https://nonbinary.wiki/wiki/Gender_neutral_language_in_English)