

The WCTS at Illinois Wesleyan Addresses: How to Write with Gender Inclusivity



How can I make my writing gender-inclusive?

- When you write with gender inclusivity, you use language which is inclusive to all genders and sexes rather than exclusive to one gender or sex.
 - In the past, the common default for writing when an individual's gender was not known was to use he-him pronouns. Now, you can be inclusive by finding out what pronouns a given subject uses or by using the more inclusive "he, her, they" or "they" options.

We're going to go into more detail on this topic but first, let's make sure our terms are clear!

What is the difference between gender and sex?

- Gender is how someone socially presents themselves. Some identities include:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Cis-gender
 - Transgender
 - Non-binary
 - Gender fluid
- Sex, on the other hand, is typically determined by chromosomes you have. Generally, "female" is used for those with XX chromosomes, and "male" for those with XY chromosomes. There are individuals who have more than two sex chromosomes as well.

How to implement gender inclusive writing:

- Check for an author's pronouns!
 - Sometimes just looking at an author's bio or at articles discussing an author's work will define their pronouns for you, but if you are unsure use **they/them**.
- Avoid generalized gender statements.
 - Instead of "man" or "woman" use "writer," "person," "student," "teacher," etc. This rule is also important for jobs, including postman, fireman, etc. Use the more-inclusive mail carrier, firefighter, and so forth to respect the multiple genders who undertake these important roles.
 - Note: The replacement will depend on the context of your writing.
- Avoid gendered titles
 - Instead of "Mr." or "Mrs.," use "Mx."
 - Instead of "husband" or "wife," use "spouse"
 - Instead of "boyfriend" or "girlfriend," use "partner"

Gendered Pronouns to Non-Gendered Pronouns Cheat Chart:

| Type of Pronoun | Gendered | Non-Gendered |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Subjective | he / she | they |
| Objective | her / him | them |
| Possessive | his / her | their |
| Reflexive | herself / himself | themselves |

Multiple Pronouns:

- Some individuals use multiple pronouns (ie. they/he or they/he/it or she/he/they).
- Depending on the individual, the order of pronouns can indicate which one they prefer the most, but for others they are interchangeable.
- When given a list of multiple pronouns, the first pronoun is most possibly their first choice (ie. they/he use they, but he can be used).
- If the pronouns are noted as interchangeable, this means the person does not care which pronouns you use.

Lastly, a Key Point:

- Pronouns are personal and are tied to identity. How someone chooses to use their pronouns is to their own personal discretion.
- Remember, you can always meet with WC tutors to assist you through this process. If you are not sure about an individual's pronouns, it is best if you ask, or if you're not able to choose non-gendered pronouns. **If in a situation you do not know how to navigate, ask!**
 - Tutors who can help with pronoun usage are listed under the “limit to” filter “LGBTQIA Plus” so you can find them easily in our WConline system.

Resources for Further Support (besides your wonderful tutors):

- [The Conscious Style Guide](#): This online resource takes you through a variety of inclusive scenarios when it comes to one's writing. It's not limited to gender but also explains how to write inclusively about race, ethnicity, occupation, disability, and many more areas of one's identity. It is always being updated with the most current information on a given topic, too.
- This book (*Web Accessibility*)'s chapter on Inclusive Writing ([available at the Ames Library in e-format](#)) addresses many of the pitfalls writers trip into when compiling research. It explains how to create a more inclusive piece while avoiding the above pitfalls.
- The APA Manual of Style is another necessary resource for thinking about inclusive writing. In fact, in APA's latest edition, the editors have moved to a bias-free language stance. More can be found out about this stance on their blog, [here](#).
 - Bonus: Ames Library has print copies of APA Style as well as [this detailed teachers' edition](#) available for you to check out using your IWU ID card.