

PROMISING PRACTICE GUIDE ON HOW TO USE GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Purpose

To show our dedication to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and equal opportunity for our employees and those we serve, it is important to use gender-inclusive language, i.e. language or terms that are gender neutral and gender equitable in our communications. This document shares promising practices for integrating gender-inclusive language into everyday use and provides other helpful information. While this document is a valuable resource for how to use gender-inclusive language, it is not an exhaustive guide.

Gender-inclusive language will be used at the U.S. Department of Commerce whenever possible. This guidance may be applied to any communication, whether oral or written, formal or informal, or addressed to an internal or external audience.

Using gender-inclusive language is important to avoid assumptions about someone's gender or pronouns, which can be harmful to our colleagues. Even minor adjustments to our language can positively impact people's lives and promote clarity, inclusion, and equality.

How to use gender-inclusive language in the workplace

Communicating in a gender-inclusive way can be challenging. Avoid guessing someone's gender identity. When in doubt, ask the person you're referring to how they identify and what terms they use.

Pronouns, Honorifics & titles

When someone shares their pronouns in their email signature or when introducing themselves, they are informing you of the pronouns you should use when referring to them. This applies, for example, whether you are speaking about them with someone else, referring to them in a document, or in their presence. If you're unsure of a person's pronouns, use *they* or *them* instead of *he* or *she* pronouns. When unsure of which honorific or title to use, opt for the person's name instead.

Phrases

Use phrases that do not imply gender. For example, instead of *Hi guys* use *Hi all, everyone, folks,* or *colleagues* to refer to groups. Because there are many different genders, avoid using binary language that implies there are only two. For example, use *all genders* instead of *both genders*.

Gendered nouns

When possible, try to use nongendered nouns such as *person* or *individual* instead of *man*. Rather than using masculine words to cover a group of people of multiple genders, we should strive for accuracy and avoid reinforcing historical gender stereotypes. Below is a list of gendered nouns and some alternatives.

Gendered noun	Alternatives
Businessman or businesswoman	Business executive
Chairwoman or chairman	Chair or chairperson
Wife, husband	Spouse, partner, significant other
Repairman	Repairperson, technician
Fisherman	Fisher
Man	Person, individual, human being
Mankind	Humanity, human beings, people

What can we do?

Here are some promising practices for using gender-inclusive language in the workplace:

Sharing your pronouns- may encourage others to share their pronouns. (See below for examples on business cards, email signatures, and Microsoft Teams profiles)

Someone's name or physical appearance does not always align with a specific pronoun. If you're unsure of someone's pronouns, use their name, non-gendered they/them pronouns, or just ask.

If you make a mistake, simply apologize, correct your mistake, and move on.

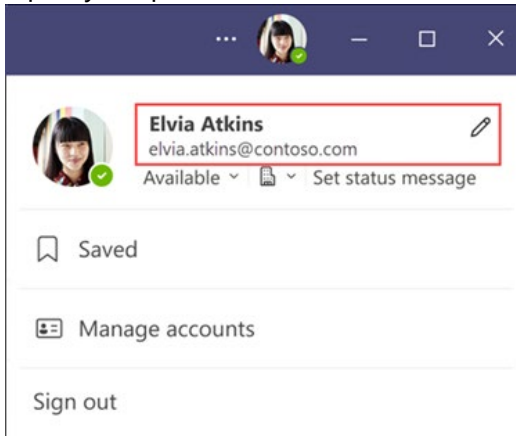
Examples of how to add pronouns to your email signature and business cards:

<p>Brittany Cobb (she/her) Title Bureau U.S. Department of Commerce</p>	<p>Carmen Mejía (they/she/ella) Title Bureau U.S. Department of Commerce</p>
<p>Christina Mosley (Pronouns: they & them) Title Bureau U.S. Department of Commerce</p>	<p>Tom Morrow Pronouns: He, Him, His (Why is this important?) Title Bureau U.S. Department of Commerce</p>

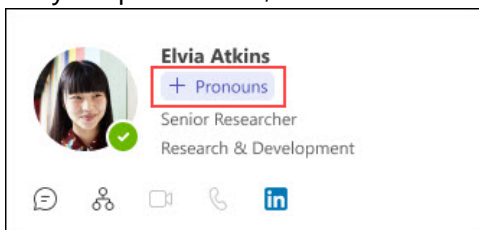


How to add pronouns to your Microsoft Teams Profile Card (for bureaus using Teams)

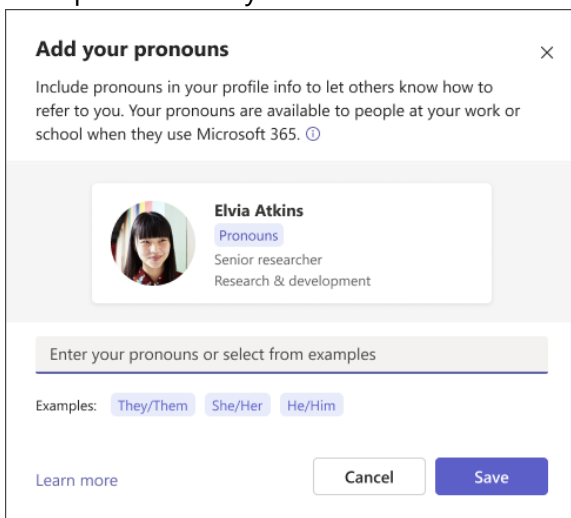
1. Open your profile card in Teams.



2. On your profile card, select **+ Pronouns**.



3. The **Add your pronouns** window appears. To add your pronouns, select from the examples or enter your own.



Additional resources

[An Introduction to Pronouns](#) from Digital.gov.

[Federal Evidence Agenda On LGBTQI+ Equity](#) from the National Science and Technology Council's Subcommittee on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Variations in Sex Characteristics (SOGI) Data.

[Gender Pronouns Resource](#) from the Sexual & Gender Minority Research Office, National Institutes of Health (NIH).

[Guidance Regarding Gender Identity and Inclusion in the Federal Workplace](#) from OPM.

[Inclusive Language | 18F Content Guide](#) from GSA's 18F.

[LGBTQI+ Cultural Competency: Pronouns & Gendered Language](#) from NOAA Pride.

[Measuring Sex, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation](#) from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

[NIH Style Guide | Inclusive and Gender-Neutral Language](#) from NIH.

[Pronouns on Your Profile in Microsoft 365](#) from Microsoft.

[Recommendations on the Best Practices for the Collection of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data on Federal Statistical Surveys](#) from the White House.

[Using Inclusive Language in Meetings](#) from NOAA's Office for Coastal Management.

[Writing Style | Gender Inclusive Communications Guidance](#) from USDA.