

# TRANS INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE



Language evolves to account for the needs of the people who use it. The language that trans people use reflects our unique experiences. There isn't one way to be trans so there isn't one universal language that works for all trans people.

Some trans people undergo medical, social, and legal transitions, while others don't. Some trans people are binary, some aren't. All trans experiences deserve to be respected and this guide is meant to provide a framework.

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## SURGERY, HORMONES, & BIOLOGY

Even if you are genuinely curious, questions about someone's medical history and body are intensely personal. A trans person is their gender no matter what chromosomes, genitals, or hormones they have. So, these questions can feel invalidating and intrusive.

Before you ask, think will the answer help me get to know this person better? Do I know this person well enough to ask such an intimate question? Will this question make this person feel respected and valued?

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## TALKING ABOUT TRANSITION

A trans person may take legal, medical, or social actions to affirm their identities or they may not. The decisions made around transition can be due to safety, privacy, necessity, etc. but all trans people are trans regardless of these decisions.



When talking about transitions, always do your best to speak in a language of affirmation i.e. they are affirming their gender through surgery.

The next page includes specific examples and suggestions for what to say and how to say it.


# WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

Born as a man/woman  
Biological man/woman  Sex assigned at birth

## Why do we use this?


When you're born a doctor looks at your chromosomes, genitals, hormones, etc, and labels you male or female. If you have variations to these two categories, you might be labeled intersex. Sometimes our gender matches this label and sometimes it doesn't. Sex assigned at birth reflects that our genders aren't reliant on this initial label.



 Sex change  
Sex reassignment  
Becoming a man/woman  Gender affirmation

## Why do we use this?

We are our gender so we are not changing, becoming, or being reassigned. Instead, we may affirm our gender identities through surgeries, hormone replacement therapy, name changes, pronouns, etc.

Real name/birth name  
Preferred pronoun/name  
identifies as  Name (whenever possible do not ask for a legal name)  
Remove preferred  
Remove identifies as - they  
are nonbinary, she is a woman



## Why do we use this?

Our language should validate and uplift our genders. This means removing anything that feels like a qualifier such as real, preferred, identifies as, etc.

Transgendered/Transgenders/ Tranny  
A transgender/Transvestite/ Transexual  Largely not used, may be considered a slur.  
Use trans man, trans woman,  
transgender person

# A PRONOUNS GUIDE



## WHAT ARE PRONOUNS?

Grammatically, pronouns refer to people and they are gendered. So when we use pronouns, we have the opportunity to affirm someone's gender identity. Everyone has pronouns that affirm their identity, not just LGBTQ people.

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## WHAT IF I DON'T KNOW SOMEONE'S PRONOUNS

Introduce yourself with your own pronouns first, giving them space to do the same. You can include your pronouns in your signature, in your name on video calls, on name tags, etc. to normalize pronouns so people can feel comfortable sharing.



## WHAT IF I GET SOMEONE'S PRONOUNS WRONG?

It happens! Correct yourself and move on. When you overly apologize, the conversation becomes about pronouns when you really just wanted an update on a deliverable. The focus is on consoling you as the person who made the mistake, not the person whose pronouns you just got wrong.

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## I CAN'T SEEM TO USE THEY, WHAT DO I DO?



We use "they" to refer to one person all the time without realizing it. If it feels off for you to use "they" intentionally, that's okay! Practice (when the person isn't around) until it feels more comfortable. My friend Nate, they are writing about pronouns.

# WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Schedule a 1:1 coaching session

Invite me to speak to your teams



## More about Me:

With more than a decade of experience in social impact, Nate Shalev is a leading expert and advisor on inclusivity helping to create workplace cultures where businesses and people thrive.

Their expertise has been highlighted in the NY Times, the Huffington Post, them.us, and more. Nate has a BA from Barnard College/Columbia University and an MA from New York University.

They are the founder of Revel Impact, a consultancy that specializes in social impact and diversity, equity, & inclusion.