Skills for Success Curriculum Resource Cover Page

Organization

College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC)

Curriculum Resource

Using Gender-Inclusive Language
The purpose of this module is to provide information on using gender-inclusive language, including its importance and how to use gender-inclusive language in conversation and in writing.

OALCF Alignment

Competency	Task Group	Level
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A1. Read continuous text	3
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B1. Interact with others	2
Competency E - Manage Learning	N/A	2
Competency F - Engage with Ohers	N/A	N/A

Goal Paths (check all that apply)

☒ Employment ☒ Postsecondary
☒ Apprenticeship ☒ Independence
☒ Secondary School Credit

Embedded Skills for Success (check all that apply)

☒ Adaptability ☐ Numeracy
☒ Collaboration ☐ Problem Solving
☒ Communication ☒ Reading
☐ Creativity and innovation ☒ Writing
☐ Digital

Notes:
The opinions expressed in this document are the opinions of the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading. The Government of Ontario and its agencies are in no way bound by any recommendations contained in this document.

Using Gender-Inclusive Language
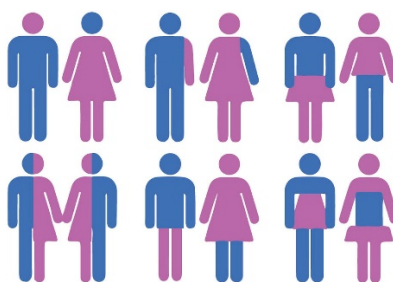
Introduction

Learning to use gender-inclusive language promotes diversity and helps to eliminate reduce gender bias. Not everyone identifies as male or female; as a result, using gender-inclusive language is one of the best ways to make everyone feel accepted and safe. It also supports diversity and inclusion.

This resource covers the following topics:

- Defining Gender-Inclusive Language
- Understanding the importance of adopting gender-neutral terminology
- Using gender-neutral expressions and inclusive language in conversation and in writing
- Learning to be inclusive of other people's pronouns
- Accessing a glossary of LGBTQIA+ pronouns

Let's get started!

Defining Gender-Inclusive Language and Understanding the Importance of Adopting Gender-Neutral Terminology

What is gender-neutral language?

Gender-neutral language refers to words that do not indicate a specific gender. Gender-neutral pronouns are pronouns used when referring to a person whose gender is unknown, and by people who do not identify as male or female.

Why is it important to adopt gender-neutral terminology, including pronouns?

"Adopting gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender equality and fight gender bias" (UN Women, p.1).

By using gender-neutral pronouns, you are also respecting the person and how they identify.

Using gender-neutral expressions and inclusive language

When speaking or writing, word your sentences using gender-neutral words and avoid the use of the generic masculine or feminine form.

Below are four methods of using gender-inclusive words in writing or speaking.

A. Avoid using expressions that use the masculine or feminine form. Instead, opt for a gender-neutral option.

USE	AVOID
people, humanity, human beings, humankind, we	men, mankind
representatives, business community, business people	businessmen / businesswoman
chair, chairperson, head	chairman / chairwoman
all	guys (when addressing a group)
human made	man-made
police officer	policeman / policewoman
flight attendant	steward / stewardess
first-year student	freshman student
owner	Landlord / landlady
partner / spouse	boyfriend / girlfriend, husband / wife

B. At times, it's possible to phrase a sentence without the use of a pronoun that could reference a specific gender. For example:

Instead of saying this	Say this
The nurse will tend to **her** patients as soon as **she** can.	The nurse will tend to patients as soon as possible.

C. Omit the pronoun that refers to the masculine / feminine gender. For example:

Instead of saying this	Say this
Each contestant will get **her** turn to deliver her speech.	Each contestant will get **a** turn to deliver their speech.

D. Use plural forms for both nouns and reference words. For example:

To gain voter confidence, **a politician** should listen to **his** constituents.
To gain voter confidence, **politicians** should listen to **their** constituents.

E. Use they/their to refer back to singular nouns

It is becoming more common to use "they" to refer to a singular noun, though it is not recommended for use in formal texts. Reserve this method for conversation or informal writing.

(Examples above retrieved from GenderTerm: UN Women online resources on the use of gender-inclusive language | UN Women – Headquarters)

Practice!

Make the following sentences gender-neutral by using one or more of the methods described above. Once you have corrected the sentence, indicate which method or methods you used.

Example:
A good lawyer will always fight for the rights of **his clients**.

Gender-inclusive correction:	A good lawyer will always fight for the rights of **their clients**.
Method used:	D: Use they/their to refer back to singular nouns

Your turn!

1. Good evening, **ladies and gentlemen**, and thank you for attending tonight's presentation.

Gender-inclusive correction:	
Method/methods used:	

2. Some of **his or her** job responsibilities will include attending out-of-town meetings, and networking with other **businessmen**.

Gender-inclusive correction:	
Method/methods used:	

3. The **policeman** gave a speeding ticket to the **guy** driving the red car.

Gender-inclusive correction:	
Method/methods used:	

4. **A student who goes** without breakfast each morning may have trouble concentrating during **her/his** exams.

Gender-inclusive correction:	
Method/methods used:	

5. The history of **mankind** is very complex.

Gender-inclusive correction:	
Method/methods used:	

How to be inclusive of other people's pronouns

Being mindful of correct pronouns shows respect. it also encourages a more inclusive environment. Read the tips below to discover how you can be more inclusive when addressing people and using appropriate pronouns.

- ✓ Never assume a person's pronouns based on how they look.
  - o Just as we shouldn't presume a person's gender according to how they look, nor should we assume what their pronouns are. Such assumptions only encourage gender stereotyping.

- ✓ Offer your pronouns when meeting someone new.
  - o When you offer your pronouns to people you meet, you encourage them to do the same and eliminate the risk of getting their pronouns wrong. "*This makes it easier for transgender and gender non-conforming people to share their pronouns with others and helps them feel safe to share their pronouns with you*" (LGBTQ Nation, 2023).

- ✓ Correct yourself and others if you or someone else uses a wrong pronoun.
  - o It isn't always easy to remember everyone's pronouns. If you or another person makes a mistake when addressing a person, correct yourself, or them, apologize and avoid dramatizing the situation.

- ✓ Avoid using terms such as "preferred pronouns."
  - o This term suggests that someone's identity is less than valid – or that how they identify is a preference and not a reality. Instead, simply use "pronouns.".

List of Some Current Gender Pronouns
(Retrieved from An (incomplete) list of gender pronouns - LGBTQ Nation)

Note that this is not a complete list as pronouns continue to evolve.

Subject	Object	Possessive Determiner	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
ce	cir	cir	cirs	cirself
co	co	cos	cos	coself
cy	cyr	cyr	cyrs	cyrself
ey	em	eir	eirs	emself
he	him	his	his	himself
hey	hem	heir	heirs	hemself
ne	nem	nir	nirs	nemself
qui	quem	quis	quis	quemself
she	her	her	hers	herself
sie	hir	hir	hirs	hirself
tey	tem	teir	teirs	temself
they	them	their	theirs	themself
xe	xem	xyr	xyrs	xemself
xie	hir	hir	hirs	hirself
yo	yo	yos	yos	yoself
ze	zir	zir	zirs	zirself
ve	vis	ver	ver	verself

Below are some examples of how to use these pronouns in sentences.

a) They
"I spoke to the marketing director, and they said they'd get back to me."
"I think someone left their laptop behind."

b) Ze/hir/hir:
"Where did ze go?"
"This pencil belongs to hir."
"Ze would rather do it hirself."

c) Xe/xem/Xirs
"I think xe is nice."
"Tell xem I say hello."
"That sandwich is xirs."

d) Ver/vir/Vis
"I think ver is nice."
"I borrowed vis pencil."
"I went to the store with vir."

e) Te/tem/ter
"Te went to the store."
"I borrowed it from tem."
"That's ter dog."

f) Ey/em/eir
"Ey wrote me a note."
"That belongs to em."
"I asked to borrow eir pencil."

(Forsey, C. 2023)

Summary

This resource covers defining gender-inclusive language, understanding the importance of adopting gender-neutral terminology and using gender-neutral expressions and inclusive language in conversation and in writing. It also discusses how to be inclusive of other people's pronouns and provides you with a list of gender-inclusive pronouns.

At first, it may be difficult to adopt gender neutral language in conversation or in written communication. You may make mistakes, and that's okay. Acknowledge your mistakes and keep trying. The words we choose have a significant impact on people around us. "*Language can make people feel respected, or it can make them feel excluded, and it's all in the way we choose to use it*" (Delfino, 2022).

Thank you for choosing to be inclusive.
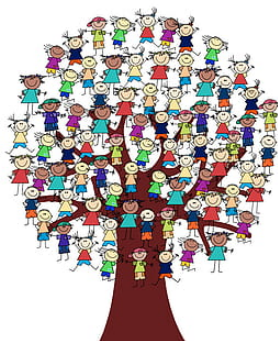
Answer Key :

(Answers may vary slightly from those listed below.)

1. Good evening, **ladies and gentlemen**, thank you for attending tonight's presentation.

Gender-inclusive correction:	Good evening, **everyone**, thank you for attending tonight's presentation.
Method/methods used:	A. Avoid using expressions that use the masculine or feminine form. Instead, opt for a gender-neutral option.

2. Some of his or her job responsibilities will include attending out-of-town meetings, and networking with other businessmen.

Gender-inclusive correction:	Some of **their** job responsibilities will include attending out-of-town meetings, and networking with other **business people**.
Method/methods used:	D. Use they/their to refer back to singular nouns and A. Avoid using expressions that use the masculine or feminine form. Instead, opt for a gender-neutral option.

3. The policeman gave a speeding ticket to the guy driving the red car.

Gender-inclusive correction:	The **police officer** gave a speeding ticket to the **person** driving the red car.
Method/methods used:	A. Avoid using expressions that use the masculine or feminine form. Instead, opt for a gender-neutral option.

4. A student who goes without breakfast each morning may have trouble concentrating during her/his exams.

Gender-inclusive correction:	**Students who go** without breakfast each morning may have trouble concentrating during **their** exams.
Method/methods used:	C. Use plural forms for both nouns and reference words

5. The history of mankind is very complex.

Gender-inclusive correction:	The history of **humanity** is very complex.
Method/methods used:	A. Avoid using expressions that use the masculine or feminine form. Instead, opt for a gender-neutral option.

References

Delfino, D. (June 17, 2022). How to Use Gender-Neutral Language at Work and in Life. Retrieved from How to Use Gender-Neutral Language at Work and in Life | Grammarly.

Forsey, C. (July 6, 2023). Gender Neutral Pronouns: What They Are & How to Use Them. Retrieved from Gender Neutral Pronouns: What They Are & How to Use Them (hubspot.com)

LGBTQ Nation. (2023). An (Incomplete) List of Gender Pronouns. Retrieved from An (incomplete) list of gender pronouns - LGBTQ Nation

UN Women. (n.d). GenderTerm: UN Women Online Resources on the Use of Gender-Inclusive Lanaguage. Retrieved from GenderTerm: UN Women online resources on the use of gender-inclusive language | UN Women – Headquarters