

Email signatures: Personal gender pronouns (PGPs)

Personal pronouns are short words for people or things that typically replace proper names. In English, third-person pronouns for individuals also convey gender: “she/her/hers” and “he/him/his.” These are known as personal gender pronouns, or PGPs. Today, other PGPs are increasingly used—reflecting the diversity of gender identities outside the binary designations of male and female. The most common of these is “they/them/theirs” but there are others.

Everyone at the foundation is free to use whichever PGPs they are comfortable with and referring to an individual by their preferred pronoun(s) conveys respect and acceptance of that person’s chosen gender identity. The foundation communications team worked closely with members of several Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to create specific guidance on using PGPs in our email signatures, and you can learn more about PGPs and gender identity in the foundation’s [Gender Equality Lexicon](#).

Q: Why should I include pronouns in my signature?

A: Having the option to include gender pronouns in your email signature is part of the foundation’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Normalizing the use of pronouns:

- Takes the burden off individuals who do not use “traditional” and binary pronouns
- Helps others avoid making assumptions about a person’s gender identity
- Shows respect for the diversity of gender identities
- Promotes awareness of trans, transgender, gender queer, and gender non-conforming communities
- Reduces anxiety for those who use non-binary pronouns or who are often misgendered

Q: What if I use multiple pronouns?

A: Some individuals use more than one set of pronouns (e.g., “she/her/hers” and “they/them/theirs”) or take “any and all” pronouns. If you prefer to use different PGPs in different situations (e.g., when sending an email to internal versus external recipients), you can create multiple signatures in Outlook and select from them as needed.

Q: Why might someone choose to leave pronouns off their signature?

A: An individual's PGPs might change depending on context or circumstances. Individuals who identify as non-binary, or who use PGPs other than "she/her/hers" and "he/him/his," might not be "out" to everybody about their gender identity and PGPs. There can also be cultural nuances and customs to consider. These individuals may choose to use their preferred non-binary pronouns only in spaces where they feel safe to do so. It is very important to acknowledge and respect this. When in doubt, it is always okay to ask somebody about their pronouns by saying something like: "What pronouns do you use?" or "How should I refer to you in X or Y context?" If ever you are unsure of someone's pronouns, use the default "they" or "them."

For all other questions, please contact:
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