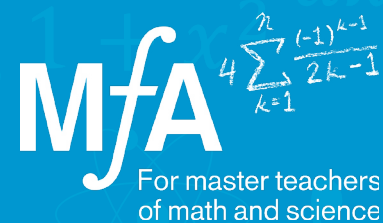


Facilitator Guide:

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND PRACTICES AT MfA

Gender-Inclusive Language



Facilitators at MfA have a special responsibility to use gender-inclusive language in their communications.¹ While some descriptors or expressions may feel more offensive than others, at their core, they all reflect and perpetuate sexism and ultimately do not align with our beliefs at MfA. This guide can serve as a resource for facilitators to consider the ways in which they can make their workshop spaces more inclusive, and thus help to make our community stronger.

In this guide, we'll discuss four aspects of gender-inclusive language at MfA:

- ▶ **Use of Pronouns**
- ▶ **Embracing "They" as a Singular Pronoun**
- ▶ **Addressing a Group**
- ▶ **Gender-Inclusive Terms and Descriptions**

Use of Pronouns

Pronouns are an important part of a person's identity and an expression of who they are. Misgendering someone can feel disrespectful and dismissive. One way misgendering happens is when you assume you know someone's gender via their appearance and then call them a name or pronoun that they don't identify with. The practice of communicating pronouns is one way to help us make sure this misgendering doesn't happen. However, when someone chooses not to share, you should use they/ them pronouns or rephrase what you are saying to refer to that person by name. MfA encourages people to engage in this practice, but it is not required. *The practice of sharing pronouns can be helpful to some genderqueer folk, but please don't pressure or judge anyone who chooses not to identify their pronouns.*

For more information about pronouns, including why one may not want to share their pronouns in different spaces, see:

- [Pronouns: A Guide from GLSEN](#)
- [Resources on Personal Pronouns](#)

Throughout your workshop, it is important to respect teachers' pronouns and help interrupt misgendering when it happens. Often, we may not be sure how to respond or our brain freezes and stops us from responding. Below is some language you can use (and practice) to help you respond.

¹ For more background on gender-inclusive language, see [NCTE Statement on Gender and Language](#), and [Gender-Inclusive / Non-Sexist Language Guidelines and Resources | Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program | University of Pittsburgh](#).

Correcting Misgendering	Statement
<u>Correcting oneself when you misgender someone</u> : Just apologize and fix it. Don't dwell.	"I agree with Ryan's statement. She made a great connection...I'm sorry. I mean, they made a great connection."
<u>Correcting another person's misgendering</u> : Be direct and clear without judgment. Then allow the person to apologize and gender their colleague correctly.	"I agree with Ryan's statement. She made a great connection." "Ryan uses they/them pronouns. Yes, they did make a great connection."

One way to help avoid misgendering and to support a respectful atmosphere is to introduce yourself with your pronouns.

Sample Introductions

Virtual Workshop Introduction:

- I'm Michael Driskill, he/him/his.
- You may notice that my Zoom name includes my pronouns so others know how to refer to me.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, please take a moment now to add your pronouns to your Zoom name.
- You can do this by clicking on the three dots in the top right and renaming yourself. We do this at MfA to create a welcoming space for our non-binary and genderqueer colleagues, which helps make our community stronger. Please be cognizant of everyone's names and pronouns during this session.

In-Person Introduction:

- I'm Leah Hirsch, she/her/hers. I am the Director of Professional Development at Math for America. I'm happy to be here.

Embracing “They” as a Singular Pronoun

Another way to include all identities in both spoken and written language is to embrace “they” as a singular pronoun. Current best practice in all academic styles allows for a generic, gender-neutral, third-person singular pronoun. By using this in our speech and writing, we can avoid isolating individuals and further show our community our dedication to diversity and inclusion.

Embracing “they” as a singular pronoun is more inclusive, avoids the use of binary statements, and is, for many, initially uncomfortable to use. The table below provides examples of how to use “they” or how to change sentence structure to avoid the use of pronouns altogether.

Gender-Inclusive	Gender-Biased
Someone left their tablet behind.	Someone left his or her tablet behind.
What a student remembers after coming back from break.	What a student remembers after he or she comes back from break.
Alex is a new teacher who is teaching physics this year.	Alex is a new teacher. He is teaching physics this year.
Jamie should wait until they are notified of their acceptance.	Jamie should wait until she is notified of her acceptance.

Addressing a Group

When we work towards norms of gender-inclusive language, we can think carefully about how we refer to groups of people. Some have started using binary statements such as “men and women” or “ladies and gentlemen” in an effort to be inclusive. However, this could isolate non-binary and genderqueer individuals in our community. It is important to remember that gender is not binary. Therefore, to help all members of our community feel included and empowered, we can change our language to embody all identities.

Gender-Inclusive	Gender-Biased
“Teachers,” “participants,” “friends,” “folks,” “all,” “everyone,” or “y’all.”	“Guys,” “ladies,” “ladies and gentlemen,” “men and women.”

When gender-biased language occurs in a workshop, either by yourself or another teacher, consider the following suggestions on how to respond clearly and respectfully.

Correcting Gender-Biased Language	Statement
<u>Correcting oneself when you use gender-biased language:</u> You do not have to beat yourself up over your mistake We all make them.	“OK guys. I’m sorry, I mean, everyone. I’ve been working to break the habit of using the gendered word “guys” when referring to groups of people. So, again...OK, everyone...”
<u>Correcting another person’s gender-biased language:</u> Be direct and clear without judgment. Then allow the person to apologize and rephrase their statement.	“I noticed you used “guys” to refer to everyone. Can we try using gender-inclusive language in this setting instead? I’ve been using y’all.”

Gender-Inclusive Terms and Descriptions

To help all our teachers and people who interact with MfA feel more included and safe, there are other ways to practice gender-inclusive language. Firstly, we can remove gendered language, such as using “congressman” as the default rather than “legislature” or “representative.” By not using words that end in “-man” as the default for a descriptor, we can move towards normalizing that anyone can perform a job regardless of their gender identity.

Gender-Inclusive	Gender-Biased
Humankind	Mankind
Personnel, Staff	Manpower
Lower classes, 9th graders, 10th graders	Lower classmen
Upper classes, 11th graders, 12th graders	Upperclassmen
Principal	Woman principal
Parent Child Sibling	Mother/father Son/daughter Sister/brother
Partner, significant other, spouse	Girlfriend/boyfriend, wife/ husband