



GENDER NEUTRAL TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Moving beyond the use of gendered titles within the legal profession (e.g., Sir/Madam; my Lord/my Lady; Mr. Justice/Madam Justice) helps to create and support a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive justice system by removing gendered distinctions and using inclusive language. Using gender neutral terminology also avoids the risk of misgendering a person whose gender you don't know, until such time as you learn their pronouns.

This Guide is intended to help you shift your language by providing alternative examples and contexts in which to use them.

IN ALL CONTEXTS

INSTEAD OF...	HOW ABOUT ...	WHEN TO USE...
She/he Her/him Her/his	They Them Their	In all contexts (writing and speaking) in which the pronouns of the person referred to are not known, or the person's pronouns are they/them/their. The gender-neutral pronoun "they" can be used in singular or plural form. Using "they" as a pronoun avoids assuming a person's gender and misgendering them. Always use a person's correct pronouns when known. The Mi'kmaq pronoun for "they/them" is "Nekem".

Tip: Include your own pronouns in your signature line and when introducing yourself. This can help to normalize stating one's pronouns, and alleviate the stress a trans or non-binary person may feel when stating their pronouns. When cisgender people state their pronouns, it signifies that they have an understanding of gender diversity and trans and non-binary identities, and that they will respect others' pronouns.

IN CORRESPONDENCE

INSTEAD OF...	HOW ABOUT ...	WHEN TO USE...
Dear Sirs Dear Messrs. Dear Sir or Madam Dear Ladies and Gentlemen	Dear Colleagues Dear Counsel Dear Recipients To All Concerned To Whom It May Concern	In correspondence where the recipient's gender is not known, the recipient is non-binary, there are multiple recipients, or a gender-neutral title is otherwise sought.

Dear Mr. Dear Ms. Dear Mrs.	Dear [recipient's name] Dear Counsel Dear Client Dear Mx. [recipient's surname] Dear Registrar or Prothonotary	In correspondence where the recipient's gender is not known, the recipient is non-binary, or a gender-neutral title is otherwise sought.
My Lord My Lady	Dear Justice [surname] To the Honourable Justice [surname] To the Presiding Justice	When writing to a Justice in the Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court.

IN COURT

INSTEAD OF...	HOW ABOUT...	WHEN TO USE...
My Lord / Lady Your Lordship / Ladyship	Justice [surname] The Court	When speaking or referring to a Justice in the Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court.
Mr. Ms. Mrs.	Counsel Colleague Friend (or Learned Friend, if they are Queen's Counsel)	When another counsel's gender is not known, the counsel is non-binary, or a gender-neutral title is otherwise sought.

RESOURCES

1. Chief Justice Christopher E. Hinkson, 'Practice Direction – Forms of Address for Parties and Counsel in Proceedings', *The Supreme Court of British Columbia*, <https://www.bccourts.ca/supreme-court/practice-and-procedure/practice-directions/civil/PD-59-Forms-of-Address-for-Parties-and-Counsel-in-Proceedings.pdf>
2. Chief Judge Melissa Gillespie, 'Notice to the Profession and Public – Forms of Address for Parties and Lawyers', *The Provincial Court of British Columbia*, <https://www.provincialcourt.bc.ca/downloads/Practice%20Directions/NP%2024%20Form%20of%20Address%20for%20Parties%20and%20Lawyers.pdf>
3. Dustin Klaudt and Lisa M/G. Nevens, 'No need to guess', *The National*, Canadian Bar Association, <https://www.nationalmagazine.ca/en-ca/articles/law/opinion/no-need-to-guess>
4. Counsel Introduction Scripts, *Canadian Bar Association – British Columbia Branch*, February 10, 2021, <https://www.cbabc.org/Publications-and-Resources/Resources/Practice-Guidelines/Counsel-Introduction-Scripts>