A Guide To Forms

by Max Tran (he or they)

Filling out a form or going to the bathroom may feel like second nature to most people. Yet, these activities are often distressing for the transgender and gender diverse community. I hope this article will help local businesses make their forms and bathrooms more inclusive and alleviate some of the stress felt by trans people.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to forms - it will depend on the information you need to collect. But, these points provide a general guide and suggest some things to think about.

Names
Many trans people start using a new name before they can change it legally. If you legitimately need to know someone's legal name, you should include a "preferred name" option.

Titles (e.g., Mr, Mrs, Miss)
Navigating titles can also be difficult for trans people, especially when available options are very gendered.

Ideally, remove titles from the form altogether. If you can't remove them, you can try to include gender-inclusive varieties (e.g., Mx, pronounced "mix").

Gender and Sex

Gender and sex are words used to mean different things; so it is important to not use them interchangeably.

Think and consider:

- Do I need to know the person's gender or sex? Make sure you aren't asking out of habit!
- Do I need to know their sex AND gender? Or, will simply their gender be enough?
- If you need to know the person's gender, be sure to include options other than male and female (e.g., non-binary, agender, genderfluid).
- Including an open-ended response option is great (there are lots of genders!). Simply having an 'X' or 'other' option is not ideal, despite these being the only options in many places (e.g., Medicare, Centrelink, etc.).
- Don't forget to consider non-western genders (e.g., Brotherboys, Sistergirls, Two-Spirit, and more). Remember, the gender binary is a western ideal that has been enforced around the world through colonisation.
- If you really need to know a person's sex (very uncommon), avoid using "biological sex" and instead use terms like "sex assigned at birth".