

A photograph of two young women smiling and holding a large rainbow flag. The woman on the left is crouching and wearing a floral patterned long-sleeved shirt and white shorts. The woman on the right is standing and wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and green patterned pants. They are outdoors on a grassy area. The rainbow flag is the central focus, with its colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple) clearly visible. The background is a clear blue sky.

Top Ten Tips to be an Effective Rainbow Ally

Guide



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Trans and Gender Diverse Edition

Built by the voices of the RMIT trans and gender diverse community

www.rmit.edu.au/tgd

Gender identity is about how we as individuals experience our gender and show it to others. For many of us, understanding our gender is an ongoing and complex process of navigating the gender spectrum, the language we choose and the terms we use to self-identify.

At RMIT we recognise that supporting the trans and gender diverse community can require a broader understanding of allyship and a unique set of recommendations. This guide complements several other resources to support this community. To find out more, including definitions of terms and a more in depth look at support offered for both students and staff, visit RMIT's LGBTQIA+ website for [students](#) and [staff](#).

As an ally you can help create a welcoming and safe environment for individuals that do not conform to conventional gender expectations. Here are some helpful tips to guide you:

1. Being transgender is not about how someone looks

We can't tell someone is trans by looking at them. This supports the idea that trans people need to look a certain way to 'pass' or to validate their trans identity. The important thing to remember is that each person is uniquely trans and gender diverse in their own way.

2. Respect privacy

Often 'coming out' as trans is a very different experience compared to 'coming out' as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Where 'coming out' in terms of sexuality can be incredibly empowering for some members of the community, unfortunately the same cannot be said for a trans person when disclosing their trans history. Due to the society we live in, knowledge of our trans history can impact how we are treated by others. Respect that everyone's story is their own to share.

3. Keep your curiosity to yourself

Don't ask about our bodies, whether we've had surgery or if we're taking hormone replacement therapy. Affirming gender is not a linear process that starts or stops at a specific time. It's often evolving, ongoing and very different for each person. Trans people may never choose to undergo a medical process and that doesn't invalidate our identity. If we do choose to take these steps, there can still be several barriers that make this difficult including financial access, long waitlists and a lack of social support. What we choose to do with our bodies is personal and no one else has a right to know.



- 4. Ask us about our pronouns**

If you forget, ask us again. Provide support as an ally to normalise pronouns in introductions, add them to your email signature and wear a pronoun badge. Whenever possible, ask everyone their pronouns and not just those whose gender identity is unknown or unclear.
- 5. Use inclusive and all gender language**

Where possible, use inclusive and all gender language such as they/them pronouns and 'folks' or 'team' instead of 'guys' or 'ladies'. It might seem like a small step but can help individuals within groups feel included and much more comfortable.
- 6. Don't be a bystander**

Fight for our identities, names and pronouns. Call out transphobic behavior and don't stand by if you see or hear something harmful. An ally's actions carry a lot of weight and can have a significant impact on cultural change and community allyship. If you hear someone being misgendered or misnamed (and you know they wouldn't want to be) step in to correct them. This can be a simple, "Their pronouns are actually..." or something of this nature.
- 7. It's okay to make mistakes**

If you use the incorrect name or pronouns, the best thing to do is apologise and move on. Don't make a scene or try to justify mistakes. This will only cause more harm.
- 8. Respect identities**

Don't ask us what our dead/birth name was or why we chose our name. The same can be said for the language or terms we use to identify. We don't want your unsolicited advice about whether or not you think it suits us or not.
- 9. Do your own research**

Just because we are the only trans people you know doesn't mean we are your only source of information. Listen to those who are in a position to share their lived experiences but understand not everyone is comfortable doing this. Ask yourself, would you ask a cisgender colleague that same question?
- 10. Support all gender spaces**

Don't worry about what bathrooms we use. We're often already doing this whenever we're faced with binary male and female options. It can take an incredible amount of courage to step into a bathroom or space that affirms our gender identity so what we need is your support not your opinion.

Want to contribute?

Contact inclusion@rmit.edu.au to share your tips on being an effective rainbow Ally.



Equity and Inclusion, Students Group

We thank RMIT staff, students, and external organisations and contacts for their help in developing this resource.

For feedback or to get in touch, please email us at: inclusion@rmit.edu.au