

NON-BINARY INCLUSION IN SPORT



Rising to
the challenge

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HOW TO BE A NON-BINARY ALLY IN YOUR SPORT OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



1 AMEND THE GENDERED STRUCTURE OF TEAMS

Does your team or activity need to be male/female gendered? Are the reasons for this good enough to really justify it? Can you alter the wording of your teams or activities to be more inclusive of non-binary people? For example, where there are men's and women's teams, you could say 'People who play for the Men's Team' and 'People who play for the Women's Team'. This subtle distinction opens up binary teams to be more inclusive of non-binary and other gender-diverse people.



2 UNDERSTAND THAT EVERYONE EXPERIENCES GENDER DIFFERENTLY

There is no one right way to identify as male or female. Femininity and masculinity can mean different things for different people. There is no one right way to identify as non-binary either. Remember that everyone experiences gender differently. Like other identities under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella, non-binary is also an umbrella term with different identities, meaning different things for different people.



3 THINK ABOUT YOUR USE OF LANGUAGE

How many times have you shouted phrases of encouragement within a game such as "Come on, lads!" or "Come on, girls!"? How many times have you used the phrase "Man on!" to warn a teammate of another player being on their back? Could you rephrase these to make them gender-neutral? Maybe try using the following instead: "Come on, team!", "Come on, everyone!" or "One on!" or even just "On!".



4 VISIBILITY IS KEY

It is a common misconception that non-binary people don't exist within sport so making their presence visible can be important. There are a variety of ways you can do this. For example, taking part in Stonewall's Rainbow Laces Campaign, including flags of the different LGBTQIA+ community on your websites and social media pages, or encouraging people to include their chosen pronouns when introducing them to team mates (non-binary people often use the pronouns they/them, rather than she/he).

5 DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK

It's important not to assume someone's gender identity, especially by how they look, or the names they use. Don't be afraid to ask what pronouns someone uses if you're not sure. Then people have the choice to tell you more about how they identify. However, people don't have to tell you their gender identity, so it's important to respect their decision and their privacy.



6 IT'S OK TO MAKE MISTAKES

Mistakes happen. You may feel guilty about making a mistake – for example, accidentally using the wrong pronouns for someone. Make sure you don't let this hang over your head or draw unnecessary attention to it. The best steps to take are to acknowledge it happened, say sorry, learn from it and move on with your conversation or activity. This experience will often make you more conscious of getting it right next time. If the person is annoyed at your mistake, assure them that you are trying your best. Don't worry, it will become second nature to you in time.



7 BE WILLING TO LEARN

When non-binary people come out, they are often met with a confused or uninformed reaction. As a friend and/or ally you might feel pleased that they confided in you. However, you might not fully understand what they mean. Everyone expresses their gender identity in different ways, so don't be afraid to learn what being non-binary means to them.



8 YOUR SUPPORT WILL BE INVALUABLE

Coming out can be a difficult experience for all LGBTQIA+ people. It can be especially difficult for non-binary people. People don't just come out once, they have to do it repeatedly with each new environment or person they meet. If a teammate comes out to you, it's often because they trust you and they want to be authentic with you. Aside from supporting your non-binary teammate or friend when coming out, you can also support them by celebrating their sporting achievements. Sport is a very gendered space, but despite this they have chosen to come out and take part, which takes a lot of determination and bravery. Listen to their perspectives on issues that may affect them in your sport, as well as issues affecting other aspects of their lives too.



9 DON'T FORGET THE WHOLE PERSON

They might be the only openly non-binary person on your team or even the only non-binary person you know in your life. That doesn't mean they should be just known as the 'non-binary person on my sports team'. Being non-binary is only one part of their identity.

10 BEING A NON-BINARY ALLY IS REWARDING

Offering support and getting to know people better is rewarding in itself. You might even make some new friends. Standing up, supporting and being there for non-binary people helps challenge everyday experiences of transphobia and discrimination. This is essential to create an accessible and inclusive environment for everyone involved in sport, physical activity and exercise.