

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN ITALIAN

As a romance language, Italian has a gendered system based on masculine and feminine, where the masculine is often overextended. Therefore, using an inclusive language ('linguaggio inclusivo' or 'linguaggio ampio') requires more attention. There is a lively debate around inclusive language in Italian where the following solutions are used:¹

1. Differentiate between masculine and feminine:

- *Cari studenti e care studentesse*
- *Buongiorno a tutti e a tutte*

2. Decline all names of professions in the feminine - including professions that weren't traditionally associated to women in the past – and don't use them by default only in their masculine form

Es. l'architetta; l'ingegnera; la ministra; la rettrice

3. As there is no such correspondence to the English pronoun 'they' (non-gendered), there are other solutions that include non-binary people or that don't assume the gender of the person/group of people we are talking about. Apart from circumlocutions, the following solutions are mostly used on communication on social media, or informal communication.

A) Circumlocutions

Es. Dottori > il personale medico

Studenti e studentesse > la classe

Scienziati > la comunità scientifica

I candidati > chi si candida

Coinvolgere il lettore > chi legge

¹ This guide has been created by SMLC students with the support of SMLC tutors as part of the project 'Decolonising Babel. Multilingual and Inclusive Language Pedagogies at Warwick and Beyond', kindly funded by IATL (Warwick).

B) Symbols

- The asterisk (to be added at the end of adjectives, nouns and pronouns, past participles)
Es. Car tutt*; Grazie a tutt**

However, the asterisk can't be pronounced

- -x; @; -y; -u (to be used in the same way as the asterisk)

Es. Carx tuttx; Grazie a tutt@; Cary tutty; Grazie a tuttu

However, as with the asterisk, x and @ can't be pronounced. -Y can be pronounced, but the pronunciation is 'I', therefore it overlaps with the masculine form in the plural. -U can be pronounced and is not associated with any gender. However, the sound reminds of the masculine -o and the vowel is actually used in some Italian dialects where it has a masculine connotation.

- The schwa -ə. (The use of this symbol is more complex and includes articles and prepositions, for example. See bibliography to know more about how to use it in a more complete way)

Es. Benvenutə!

Ognunə ha gli stessi diritti

Lə maestrə oggi è statə assente

This symbol is part of the phonological alphabet (it is the final sound of the word 'the', for example), therefore it can be pronounced and is not associated with any gender. In this case, criticism comes from the fact that it is not included in all keyboards and is not recognised by online readers. The second, very important issue, is that neurodivergent people might have difficulties in reading this symbol, even if this doesn't seem a unanimous difficulty.

In addition to its use on social media and informal communication, the schwa is used by three independent publishers in Italy, Effequ, Asterisco Edizioni and Edizioni minoritarie. It is regularly used by the sociolinguist Vera Gheno, and has been used in

articles published on national newspapers by the writer and intellectual Michela Murgia. In August 2023 the Conservatory in Bologna published its admission list for next year using the schwa (idoneə/ ammesse - 'eligible'). The Accademia della Crusca maintained its position against the use of any of the previous symbols.

Further resources:

[Schwa: storia, motivi e obiettivi di una proposta | Treccani, il portale del sapere](#)

[Schwa, asterisco e linguaggio inclusivo: proviamo a rispondere alle critiche più frequenti – Valigia Blu](#)

[Linguaggio inclusivo in italiano: una guida pratica - TDM Magazine \(tdm-magazine.it\)](#)

[Come si scrive – Italiano Inclusivo](#)