

Overview

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing (The Centre) recognises that in working with diverse stakeholders and audiences it is key to pronounce names correctly. People's names form part of people's personal, cultural, and spiritual identity. This resource aims to support inclusive practices when pronouncing people's names with a view to fostering cultural safety and belonging amongst stakeholders, colleagues and consumers.

Key Considerations

- Be aware of any conscious and unconscious biases that you may have in relation to people who have a name that is different to names used by the dominant culture.
- When you pronounce a name correctly, you instantly create a sense of connection as people's names are tied to personal, cultural, and spiritual identity.
- Being able to express one's language and culture is a human right. Anglicising names or converting culturally and linguistically diverse names into English can be disrespectful of people's personal, cultural, and spiritual identity.
- In order for people to better 'fit into' the dominant culture and increase their job prospects, people often change their names. While this might make it easier for people to pronounce their name, it puts the onus on the person with the non-Anglo or non-Eurocentric sounding name rather than people in the dominant culture to adapt and make an effort to pronounce the name correctly.
- Making an effort to pronounce someone's name correctly demonstrates that you are culturally sensitive and care about ensuring people feel comfortable and welcome and helps to build trust and rapport.
- Keep in mind that people in Australia with non-Anglo or non-Eurocentric names are in a vulnerable position.

Key tips on how to pronounce someone's name properly

- Show your interest on pronouncing someone's name correctly.
- If you don't know how to pronounce someone's name simply ask the person politely how to pronounce their name or check you have pronounced their name correctly.
- You can admit that you don't know how to pronounce someone's name and gain their support to help you pronounce it correctly.
- Repeat the person's name after they introduce themselves to check if you are pronouncing the name correctly.
- "Do not show that you are doing them a favour by trying to pronounce their name right or that the effort is onerous for you. Instead, empower and support them. If

someone corrects you for mispronouncing, for example, don't respond with 'I'm so sorry!' Do say, 'Thank you for correcting me.'¹

- If you feel your name may need phonetics, it is recommended adding the phonetic spelling of your name to your email signature. You can also record your name's pronunciation and include it in your email signature.
- When making public presentations such as webinars, training, conferences or events, research and check with the person/people beforehand in relation to the phonetics so that it is said correctly in a public setting.

Things to Avoid

- Tapping the person on the shoulder because you would rather not get their name wrong.
- Pointing to them in a meeting.
- Replacing their name with him/her, them.
- Replacing their name with nicknames (unless the person wants to be called a nickname) such as "mate", "love" "darling" "buddy" etc.

Further Reading:

- Carnegie Mellon University, Phonetic spelling instructions. <https://www.cmu.edu/hub/registrar/docs/phonetic-spelling-instructions.pdf>
- Tapia, Y. (2021, April 20). Important to correctly pronounce ethnic names. Northern Star. <https://northernstar.info/85274/uncategorized/important-to-correctly-pronounce-ethnic-names/>
- Adibe, N. (2020, October 29). Are ethnic names too hard to pronounce, or are you just ignorant? Studybreaks. <https://studybreaks.com/thoughts/ethnic-names/>
- Wazwaz, N. (2021, April 8). Why pronouncing names correctly is more than common courtesy. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/976385244>
- Panwar, R. (2022, January 11). Why getting someone's name right matters. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2022/01/why-getting-someones-name-right-matters>
- Elkharsa, Y. (2021, November 3). Put some respect on my name. The Michigan Daily. <https://www.michigandaily.com/michigan-in-color/put-some-respect-on-my-name/>
- Anpu (2020, October 8). Facebook. https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02SPhBR2pZCijQYHECCSwh17onjBCDg1J8i1Hsjr997xrNKuQcdAm9AD8r2FifN4pl&id=161171417264193&sfnsn=mo

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¹ Panwar, R. (2022, January 11). Why getting someone's name right matters. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2022/01/why-getting-someones-name-right-matters>