

What is a pronoun?

Pronouns are the words you may like others to use for you in place of your proper name. Some examples include “she/her” or “he/him” or gender inclusive pronouns, such as “they/them” or “ze/hir,” [pronounced: zee/heer]. Some people use specific pronouns, any pronouns, or none at all.

Here is an example of using “they/them” in a sentence: Marie is substituting for me today and they are an excellent teacher.

Using singular “they” pronouns have been used in the English language for centuries. If you are still struggling with using this, remember, it takes practice!

Why Share Pronouns?

Pronouns can sometimes be a signifier for someone’s gender identity but not always. We do not want to assume people’s gender identity based on expression (typically shown through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms etc.) Sharing your pronouns gives everyone the opportunity to self-identify instead of assuming someone’s identity or which pronouns they use. Providing space for people to share pronouns is a first step toward respecting people’s identity and creating a more welcoming space for people of all genders.

Providing space and opportunity for people to share their pronouns does not mean that everyone feels comfortable or needs to share their pronouns and that’s ok. In this case please refrain from using gendered pronouns for that person and refer to the person by their name or use gender inclusive pronouns.

Pronoun Guide

What if I make a mistake?

Misgendering refers to the experience of being labeled by others as a gender other than one that a person identifies with. Because many (not all) associate their pronouns with their gender identity, using the wrong pronouns intentionally or unintentionally is a form of misgendering.

If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun when identifying someone, please apologize and continue the conversation using the correct pronouns. Many people find it uncomfortable when people give a long apology for misgendering them and it could also potentially out them.

When in doubt, it is best to use inclusive pronouns like they/them/ theirs. The person can correct you or you can ask them for their gender pronouns.

How do I ask someone what their pronouns are?

Asking pronouns does not have to be a long conversation. You should share your pronouns as a way of opening up the conversation. Here is an example: “My name is Donna and I use she/her pronouns. Would you mind sharing the name you would like me to call you and the pronouns you would like to use?”



Office of Community Partnerships

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/partnerships/

For More Information Contact:

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Sources: GLSEN Pronoun Guide <https://www.glsen.org/activity/pronouns-guide-glsen>
Preferred Gender Pronouns For Faculty, materials written by Mateo Medina for Hampshire College