



Pronoun guide

Pronouns are words we use to replace someone’s name or title, and in English they are marked for gender. You can’t know what pronouns someone uses just by looking at them, even when someone doesn’t “look” trans, genderqueer, etc. Using someone’s pronouns correctly is important because it shows that you respect them. The following guide is a starting point for using pronouns respectfully.

How do I know which pronouns to use?

If the person you’re referring to is a stranger or brief acquaintance (like a server, cashier, fellow bus patron, etc), you likely don’t need to know.

If the person is a classmate, student, or coworker, for example, it is best to ask when appropriate. Try:

- “What pronouns do you use?”
- “How would you like me to refer to you?”
- “How would you like to be addressed?”
- “My name is Tou and my pronouns are he and him. What about you?”

People may change their pronouns without changing their name, appearance, or gender. Try making pronouns an optional part of name tags or check-ins at meetings or in class to normalize sharing.

What if I make a mistake?

People may have varying reactions to being misgendered depending on several factors. If you

harm someone by making a mistake, don’t expect or demand any particular response.

Most people appreciate a quick apology and correction at the time of the mistake. Try:

- “Her books are—I’m sorry, hir books are over there.”

By correcting yourself, you’re modeling respectful pronoun use for others in the conversation and helping yourself remember for next time.

If you only realize the mistake later, a brief apology can help. Try:

- “I’m sorry I used the wrong pronoun earlier. I’ll be more careful next time.”

When should I correct others?

Some people may not want a lot of public attention to their pronouns, while others will appreciate you standing up for them. If someone uses the wrong pronoun for a person who isn’t present, try a brief correction:

- “I think Sam uses she and her pronouns. And yes, I’m going to her house later too!”

It can be challenging to remember pronouns at first. The only solution is to practice! Correct pronoun use is an easy step toward showing respect for people of every gender. Below are just a few common pronoun sets you can learn and practice.

	Nominative (subject)	Objective (object)	Possessive determiner	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
He	<i>He</i> laughed	I called <i>him</i>	<i>His</i> dog barks	That is <i>his</i>	He likes <i>himself</i>
She	<i>She</i> laughed	I called <i>her</i>	<i>Her</i> dog barks	That is <i>hers</i>	She likes <i>herself</i>
They	<i>They</i> laughed	I called <i>them</i>	<i>Their</i> dog barks	That is <i>theirs</i>	They like <i>themselves</i>
Per	<i>Per</i> laughed	I called <i>per</i>	<i>Per</i> dog barks	That is <i>pers</i>	Per likes <i>perself</i>
Ze and hir (zee/heer)	<i>Ze</i> laughed	I called <i>hir</i>	<i>Hir</i> dog barks	That is <i>hirs</i>	Ze likes <i>hirsself</i>

