

# PRONOUNS:

## A RESOURCE GUIDE

### WHAT IS A PRONOUN?

Pronouns are the words used to refer to someone, often used in place of the person's name. For example, you might say, "That is her desk."



### WHY DO PRONOUNS MATTER?

You can't always know what someone's pronouns are by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity. When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or dysphoric—often all of the above.

It is a privilege to not have to worry about which pronoun someone is going to use for you based on how they perceive your gender. If you have this privilege, yet fail to respect someone else's gender identity, it is not only disrespectful and hurtful, but also oppressive.

### WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF PRONOUNS?

Pronouns can look like, but are not limited to:

- he/him/his (masculine pronouns)
- she/her/hers (feminine pronouns)
- they/them/theirs (neutral pronouns)
- ze/zir/zirs (neutral pronouns)
- ze/his/hirs (neutral pronouns)



### PRONOUN ETIQUETTE:

If you don't know what pronouns to use, listen first. If you must ask which pronoun the person uses, start with your own. For example, "Hi, I'm Alex and I use the pronouns he and him. What about you?" Then use that person's pronoun and encourage others to do so.

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### ASK ✓

Remember: you can't always know someone's pronouns by their appearance.

You can respectfully ask, "Which pronouns do you use?"

### RESPECT ✓

It is important to use the correct pronouns when referring to someone because it honors their gender identity and is a sign of mutual respect.

### PRACTICE ✓

If someone's pronouns are unfamiliar to you, there are resources.

[practicewithpronouns.com](http://practicewithpronouns.com) can help you learn about using pronouns.

## WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE?

If you accidentally refer to someone with the wrong pronoun, simply apologize, correct yourself, and move on. For example, "The other day he- sorry, I mean she, told me she's moving to Philly."

**Never refer to a person as "it" or "he-she". These are offensive slurs used against trans and gender non-conforming individuals.**

HE

ZE

SHE

THEY

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Practice With Pronouns

<https://www.practicewithpronouns.com>

#### Sources and Citations

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