

PRONOUNS: QUICK TIPS



What are Pronouns?

Pronouns are words that can replace nouns. Pronouns help specify who is being referred to, and using the correct pronouns shows respect for an individual's identity.

Neopronouns

A Neopronoun can be a word created to serve as a pronoun without expressing gender. They are a category of new or “non-traditional” pronouns used by individuals to express their gender identity in a way that feels more authentic or fitting for them.

How do you know someone’s pronouns?

Politely ask! Even better, introduce yourself with your pronouns first. This takes the pressure off the other individual and signifies that you are safe person for them to be their authentic selves with. If you forget in the introduction you can always come back and say, “I’m sorry, I forgot to introduce my pronouns. Mine are ... may I ask yours?”

Using Pronouns in Conversation

Once you know someone’s pronouns, use them consistently.

Here are examples for different pronouns:

- He/Him: "John said he would arrive at 3 p.m. I spoke to him yesterday."
- She/Her: "Sadia likes to read. I gave her a book for her birthday."
- They/Them: "Jordan is coming to the event. I spoke to them earlier, and they said they'll bring the drinks."
- Ze/Zir: "Tyrell is a great artist. I love zir work!"

Using “They” is Grammatically Correct

The use of "they" as a singular pronoun has a long history in the English language and is grammatically correct. Historically, "they" has been used as a gender-neutral singular pronoun to refer to an individual whose gender is unknown or unspecified. This usage dates back to the 14th century and has been widely accepted by prominent writers, including Shakespeare, Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens (Bennet, 2015).



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Making Mistakes

It's natural to make mistakes when learning about pronouns, especially if you're not used to using them. If you use the wrong pronouns:

1. Apologize briefly: "I'm sorry, I meant they."
2. Correct yourself: "Jordan said they would arrive at 3 p.m."
3. Move on: Don't dwell on the mistake. Acknowledge it and continue the conversation.

Don't dwell on your mistake or make a big deal of it; this leads to the person who has been misgendered having to then make you feel better and puts the mental and emotional load on them.

If you are making the same mistake often, you may need to do some internal reflection on the mental image you have of this person. Make sure you are seeing the person for who they are and not who you think they are.

Pronouns in Professional and Social Settings

In some environments, such as workplaces or educational settings, it's becoming more common for people to share their pronouns in introductions.

For example:

- In a Zoom meeting: "Hi, I'm Sam, and my pronouns are they/them."
- On an email signature: "Alex Johnson (they/them)"
- You can also add your pronouns to ID badges, name tags, and business cards.
- In a group setting make space for pronouns in introductions. If you are facilitating or leading the conversation, make sure to add yours to let others know it is a safe space to do so. Example: "My name is Imani, my pronouns are she/they."

If pronouns are not explicitly shared, you can still ask, and you can always use gender-neutral language (e.g., "they") if you're unsure.

Remember! Pronouns Can Be Fluid!

Fluid pronouns refer to the fact that pronouns can change over time or depending on how a person feels or identifies in a given moment. Pronoun fluidity recognizes that identity isn't static for everyone and that language can adapt to affirm and respect how individuals navigate their sense of self.



Looking for more? Check out our Gender Identity and Pronouns: A Comprehensive Guide at:
www.outontheshelf.com/education-and-resources/resources/