

# PRONOUNS

## Why They Matter

Often used during introductions or while referencing someone during a conversation, pronouns help you know how someone would like to be addressed in any given situation.

Examples:

- he/him/his
- she/her/hers
- they/them/theirs
- ze/zir/zirs
- she/they or he/they
- Just my name please!

## Pronouns & Gender Identity—Ask, Don't Assume!

Gender identity is our internal, individual experience of gender. It is directly linked to our sense of self and the sense of being male, female, both or neither.

While pronouns are pivotal to an individual's gender identity and how they relate to the world and others, it is important to keep in mind that a person's pronouns are not exclusively linked to gender and may not match your perception of that individual. Your assumption can leave a person feeling invalidated and dismissed. Taking the time to get to know a person better will help everyone feel more connected and respected.

Remember, mistakes happen and that's ok! Acknowledge your mistake the same as you would any other—recognize, apologize and move on.

When in doubt, use neutral pronouns (they/them) when referencing someone until you have a chance to ask. Like with anything worth doing, practice makes perfect and your efforts will be appreciated. Until we can ask an individual or a group of people how they identify, we default to neutral language.

Here are a few ways you can be more inclusive and affirming when it comes to pronouns:

Share your pronouns when introducing yourself. For example: "My name is Patrick and I use they/them pronouns."

Include your pronouns in your email signature, on name tags at events, in your zoom name, and on your social media bio.

When addressing groups of people or people whose pronouns have not been shared with you, use gender neutral language such as "elle" instead of "el" or "ella,"

“siblings,” “students,” “all” or “folks” rather than “brothers and sisters,” “guys,” “sir,” etc.

Putting pronouns into practice shows your commitment to building an affirming space for all types of identities and experiences. We encourage you to use and share these tips.

<https://gaycenter.org/pronouns/>

