A Guide To Pronouns

Why is Gender-Neutral Language Important?

• It explicitly includes women and other marginalized genders, pushing back against patriacrchal language.

• It normalizes LGBTQ+ experiences, which is the first step to complete equality.

• You might be asked to refer tosomeone using gender-neutral lanquage or alternative pronouns. Never make assumptions! It is impossible to be completely certain of a person's gender and pronouns without asking the person directly.

How Do I Use Gender-Neutral Language?

• Avoid gendering strangers, especially children, as much as possible.

• See the chart below for examples of gendered language and some gender-neutral alternatives.

Gendered Word/Phrase		Gender Neutral Alternative
biologically female	biologically male	assigned female/male at birth, person with (body part)
aunt	uncle	auncle, unty, pibling, rentsib, nickname
niece	nephew	nibling (sometimes chibling, cousin)
daughter	son	child, kid, offspring, spawn
woman	man	human, adult, person, friend
girl	boy	human, child, kid, person
mother	father	parent, per, dommy, maddy, proper name
wife/girlfriend	hsuband/boyfriend	spouse, partner, lover, significant other, datemate, squeeze, paramour, (enbyfriend)
ladies and gentleman		colleagues, friends, everyone
boys and girls		children, kids, class, everyone

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What Are Pronouns?

• Pronouns are words that substitute for nouns. Gender pronouns such as he,she, and they are used ini place of a person's name.

Why Are Pronouns Important?

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

How Do You Ask Someone Which Pronoun They Use?

• Simply ask, "What pronouns do you use?" or "Can you remind me what pronouns you use?" It might feel awkward at first, but with practice, it will become a natural part of meeting someone new. You can also introduce your own name and pronouns first as a way of putting others at ease.

What Are Neopronouns?

• Neopronouns are third-person pronouns that have been added to the English language relatively recently. Historical examples include thon and co. Contemporary neopronouns take many formssuch as zelhir and faelfaer.

What is Singular They?

• The singular "they" conjugates just like plural "they" but refers to one person. It has been identified by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary--and by Transgender and Nonbinary people--as a grammatically correct gender neutr~l pronoun. The singular "they" was also recognized by Merriam-Webster as the 2019 Word of the Year.

What If I Make A Mistake?

• When you misgender someone: apologize, correct yourself, and move on. Avoid making it about how bad you feel that you messed up because that could make the person you misgendered feel responsible for comforting you. It's OK to make mistakes. Retraining your brain is not an easy thing to do, and it takes time, effort, dedication, and practice! However, it is x_our job to remember people's pronouns.

Pronoun	Subject Pronoun	Object Pronoun	Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive Pronoun
They (singular)	They want	It belongs to them	It is their pen	It is theirs	They wrote to themself
They (plural)	They want	It belongs to them	It is their pen	It is theirs	They wrote to themselves
She	She wants	It belongs to her	It is her pen	It is hers	She wrote to herself
He	He wants	It belongs to him	It is his pen	It is his	He wrote to himself
Ze	Ze wants	It belongs to hir	It is hir pen	It is hirs	Ze wrote to hirself
Fae	Fae wants	It belongs to Fae	It is faer pen	It is tfaers	Fae wrote to faerself

Make Your Support Visible

• Take the initiative! Introduce yourselfwith your name and pronouns.
  o e.g. "My name is Jane, and I use she/her pronouns."

• Add your pronouns to your email signature line.
  o e.g. "Jane Q. Smith (she/her)"

• Add your pronouns to your name plates, badges, and online directories.

• Attend SafeZone trainings and other events to learn more about LGBTQ+ advocacy.

• Wear a pronoun pin to events where you might meet new people.

• Use gender-neutral language in your daily speech and writing.

• Display pride flags in your office.

• Share this guide with your colleagues!

Leading Organizations for Transgender Advocacy:

National Center for Transgender Equality
transequality.org

Transgender Law Center
transgenderlawcenter.org

Trans Student Educational Resources
transstudent.org

Trans Women of Color Collective
twocc.us

Trans Lifeline
translifeline.org
(877) 565-8860