



be in • be out • belong

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that can be used to refer to someone in the third person without repeatedly using their name. For example, we would say that “Paige went to her rehearsal” rather than “Paige went to Paige’s rehearsal”. We use pronouns to refer to people all the time. Because pronouns can also (but do not necessarily) communicate gender, it is important to use someone’s proper pronouns.

What pronouns should I use?

It is a best practice to not assume someone’s pronouns or gender; you should always ask rather than assuming.

Ways to ask that include:

- “What pronouns would you like me to use for you?”
- “My pronouns are they/them/theirs. What are your pronouns?”

If you are doing introductions in a class, group, or event, it is a good practice to include pronouns in introductions.

One thing to remember is that some people use different pronouns in different spaces for safety. You may ask where you can use someone’s pronouns to avoid outing someone.

What if I can’t ask someone for their pronouns?

It is not always possible to ask someone for their pronouns before needing to use them. In this case, it is best to use the singular they/them/theirs pronoun set. They/them pronouns do not have a specific masculine/feminine connotation to them, and using them is a good way to be inclusive for all people. Remember, you can not tell somebody’s gender or pronouns without asking. We commonly use the singular they to refer to people whose gender we do not know (example: “he said his neighbor lost their cat”).

How do I use different pronouns?

The next page has a guide with some pronoun sets and how to use them in different contexts. Pronouns are always introduced in the same order, so you can relate pronoun sets that are new to you to sets you are more familiar with by comparing the form of the pronoun with the corresponding form in a set you already know well (ex: she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs, ze/zir/zirs, fae/faer/faers).



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Pronoun Usage Chart

Pronoun Set or Usage	Subject	Object	Possessive Determiner	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
She/her/hers	She <u>thinks</u>	I emailed <u>her</u>	<u>Her</u> office	That is <u>hers</u>	<u>Herself</u>
He/him/his	He <u>thinks</u>	I emailed <u>him</u>	<u>His</u> office	That is <u>his</u>	<u>Himself</u>
They/them/theirs	They <u>think</u>	I emailed <u>them</u>	<u>Their</u> office	That is <u>theirs</u>	<u>Themselves</u>
Fae/faer/faers	Fae <u>thinks</u>	I emailed <u>faer</u>	<u>Faer</u> office	That is <u>faers</u>	<u>Faerself</u>
1/2/3*	1 <u>thinks</u>	I emailed <u>2</u>	<u>2</u> office	That is <u>3</u>	<u>2self</u>

*This is not a pronoun set, but is a way to think about the order that pronouns are listed for when you hear these sets or other pronoun sets (pronoun sets besides he, she, and they are called neopronouns). Not all pronoun sets follow the he or she sets perfectly, but many do.

What if I use the wrong pronoun?

Read the situation for safety. If is safe, briefly apologize to the person you used the wrong pronoun for (using the wrong pronoun for someone is called misgendering). Keep your apology brief, and remember that the mistake is not the fault of the person who has been misgendered. The best way to show sincerity is by adjusting behavior and

using the proper pronouns going forward.

What if someone else uses the wrong pronoun?

Make sure to read the situation and determine if it is safe for the person who has been misgendered. If it is safe, you can address the situation by saying something like "I believe they use they/them/theirs pronouns". If the situation appears unsafe, check in with the person when they are safe again.