



PERSONAL GENDER PRONOUNS

Why are we asking for which pronouns you use to describe yourself?

Gender identity is an important aspect of who we are as individuals. While we know that there are several gender identities (transgender man, transgender woman, genderqueer, non-binary, gender non-conforming, two-spirit, cisgender man, or cisgender woman), we cannot assume we know a person's gender identity simply by observing them visually. Requesting your personal gender pronouns allows us to create an inclusive conference so that participants can know how you choose to self-identify. This allows all of us to affirm each other's gender identity.

I did not realize there are so many pronouns!

The LGBTQ communities use and create gender-inclusive pronouns, in addition to she/her and he/him, to include the variety of gender identities that exist. The following is an incomplete list of pronouns that individuals use.

Subject	Object	Possessive	Reflexive	Pronunciation
Ey	Em	Eir	Eirself	Ay (as in "way")/em (as in "Emma")/ear/ear-self
He	Him	His	Himself	
Per	Per	Pers	Perself	Pur/purz/pur-self
She	Her	Her	Herself	
They	Them	Their	Themselves	
Ve	Ver	Vis	Verself	Vee/Vur/Viz/Vur-self
Ze/Zie	Hir	Hir	Hirself	Zee/Here/Heres/Here-self

What should I do if I make a mistake with someone's personal gender pronouns?

Acknowledge, apologize, and continue on with the conversation. As when learning something new, it is a process to incorporate the new pronouns into your vocabulary. With practice, it will be second-nature.

Respect personal boundaries

Asking for and learning someone's pronouns does not open the door to ask personal questions about their body, their sexual practices, what their "real" name is/was, or if they "are in transition."

These are not "preferred"

Some groups will ask for your preferred pronouns. While they are indeed asking for your personal gender pronouns you use to describe yourself, "preferred" also implies optional. Allowing individuals to self-identify is not a preference – it is a value of equity and inclusion practice.

Try them out!

Want some practice? Use our exercise sheet found later in this packet. Also, the Trans Student Educational Resources provides resources on personal gender pronouns at <http://www.transstudent.org/pronouns101>. You can also use the following interactive website to practice using gender pronouns that are new to you: <http://www.practicewithpronouns.com>



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How should I ask for preferred name and personal pronouns?

Always start by introducing yourself first.

"Hello! My name is Jonathan, but I go by Jon. My pronouns are they/them."

"Hi! My name is Margarita, but I go by Margo. My pronouns are Ze/Hir."

Then ask them for their name and pronouns, examples:

"Do you have a preferred name?" or "What name do you prefer I use?"

"Which pronouns do you use?" or "Which pronouns do you use to describe yourself?"

Group settings

If you are in a group, introduce yourself first. Then have everyone go around and give their preferred name, pronouns, and whichever introductory information you would like participants to provide. Please listen to participant responses. If someone skips pronouns, gently ask them, "And Jo, which pronouns do you use?" "Sorry, if I missed it Tanaya, which pronouns do you use?" If they decline to provide their pronouns or preferred name, do not push the issue or "call them out." There could be many reasons why they are choosing not to disclose this information in a group setting – including not feeling trust or secure yet in the group. Focus on building trust with them moving forward.

What if someone seems confused?

Try using the language from the first page of this guide (under "Why are we asking for which pronouns you use to describe yourself?"). Alternatively, you could ask, "J.P., if someone were to use pronouns to describe you, like they/them, or she/hers, or he/him, which would you prefer they use?"

I can't find someone on my attendance roster!

Let's assume you go around and ask everyone for their preferred names and pronouns and you have to also check names off an attendance roster. However, as people are introducing themselves, one individual says their preferred name is J.P. On your attendance roster, you may have no J.P., and you can't decide if this person is Jon, Juanita, or Janelle on the roster. Ask them for their last name/surname to clarify who they are, instead of a first name. "And what is your last name J.P.? Ah, great, here you are!" Why use a surname? If someone is registered as Mary, but goes by Matthew, they may not want to hear Mary called out to the group because your system required birth name at registration.

Helpful tips!

- Use nametags and have a space for folks to write in their pronouns!
- Try to capture preferred name in your registration process and only provide preferred name to teachers, counselors, providers, nurses, and anyone else who may be interacting with your client!
- If you are interviewing someone for a job, that is not the time to be asking someone about their pronouns. Unless it is a bona fide qualification for a job or internship, you cannot ask someone regarding their gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, age, or disability status.



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Exercise Sheet

Select a set of pronouns you would like to practice with and then practice trying them out in the paragraph below. If you are having difficulty, consider a pronoun set you are familiar with (she/her or he/him) and look at the corresponding column. To use this multiple times, make copies before completing the worksheet.

Subject	Object	Possessive	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
Ey	Em	Eir	Eir	Eirself
He	Him	His	His	Himself
Per	Per	Pers	Pers	Perself
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themself
Ve	Ver	Vis	Vis	Verself
Ze/Zie	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself

I think you will really enjoy working with _____. _____ started working here two years ago. You can find _____ office on the third floor, room 3297. _____ earned _____ degree at the University of Minnesota. It is important to _____ that our organization develops intercultural competency working with LGBTQ communities. It took a lot of work, but did you know that _____ developed this program _____? _____ works with all _____ clients _____. I see that you went to the Opportunity Conference this past year. _____ went to the Opportunity Conference too and _____ said that _____ really enjoyed _____.