

Why are gender pronouns important?

Not all people identify according to the binary of male/female. For example, some people identify as transgender, non-binary, etc., and use corresponding pronouns that better describe their identity. To respectfully honor identity pronouns, here is a guide.

How do I know which pronouns to use?

If the person you're referring to is a stranger or brief acquaintance (like server, cashier, fellow bus patron, etc.), you may not need to know. If the person is a classmate, student, or coworker, for example, it is best to ask. Try:

- "What pronouns do you use?"
- "How would you like me to refer to you?"
- "How would you like to be addressed?"
- "My name is Tou and my pronouns are he and him. What about you?"

Do pronouns change?

Remember that people may change their pronouns without changing their name, appearance, or gender identity. Try making pronouns an optional part of introductions or check-ins at meetings or class.

What if I make a mistake?

Most people appreciate a quick apology and correction at the time of the mistake. Try:

- "Her books are—I'm sorry, hir books are over there." By correcting yourself, you're modeling respectful pronoun use for others in the conversation.

If you only realize the mistake later, a brief apology can help. Try:

- "I'm sorry I used the wrong pronoun earlier. I'll be more careful next time."

How do I respond if someone corrects me?

Keep in mind that when someone corrects your usage of pronouns, it is to help you better communicate with the individual. Try:

- "Thank you for correcting me. I'll remember next time."

When should I correct others?

Some people may not want a lot of public attention to their pronouns, while others will appreciate you standing up for them. If someone uses the wrong pronoun for a person who isn't present, try a brief correction:

- "I think Sam uses she and her pronouns. And yes, I'm going to her house later too!"

It can be tough to remember pronouns at first. The best solution is to practice! Correct pronoun use is an easy step toward showing respect for people of every gender.

Type	Pronouns	Real World Examples
Feminine	She, her, hers	She went to the store. I texted her yesterday. The book is hers.
Masculine	He, him, his	He went to the store. I texted him yesterday. The book is his.
Gender Neutral/Non-binary	They, them, their(s)	They went to the store. I texted them yesterday. The book is theirs.
Gender Neutral/Non-binary	Ze, hir, hirs (pronounced: zee, heer, heers)	Ze went to the store. I texted hir yesterday. The book is hirs.

For more information about pronoun usage and why personal pronouns are important, visit <https://www.mypronouns.org>
 Adapted from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.