Gender Pronouns Guide

We are working towards a society where anyone and everyone can choose the pronouns that feel best for their own identity, whether they identify as a man, woman, agender, or fluid between the binary. The following guide is a starting point for using pronouns respectfully.

How do I know which pronoun to use?

If the person you are referring to is a stranger or brief acquaintance (like a server, a cashier, ect.) 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 Alex and my pronouns are she and her. What about you?"

How often do pronouns change?

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

What if I make a mistake?

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

- "I saw her last – I'm sorry, I saw them last week."

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."

When should I correct others?

Some people may not want a lot of public attention to their pronouns, while others 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 he and him pronouns. And yes, I am hanging out with him tomorrow!"

It can be tough to remember pronouns at first. **The best solution is to practice!** Correct pronoun use is an easy way to show respect for people of any gender.

	Nominative (Subject)	Objective (Object)	Possessive determiner	Possessive Pronoun	Reflective
Common Pronouns					
He	*He* laughed	I called *him*	*His* eyes gleam	That is *his*	He likes *himself*
She	*She* laughed	I called *her*	*Her* eyes gleam	That is *hers*	She likes *herself*
Nonbinary Pronouns These are often used by transgender, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people There are many more examples than listed of nonbinary pronouns					
They	*They* laughed	I called *them*	*Their* eyes gleam	That is *theirs*	They like *themselves*
Ze (or zie) and hir	*Ze* laughed ("zee")	I called *hir* ("heer")	*Hir* eyes gleam ("heer")	That is *hirs* ("heers")	Ze likes *hirself* ("heerself")

Tips on How to be an Ally to Transgender People!

STOP, LOOK, LISTEN
You should not assume anyone's gender identity or their pronouns. If you do not know their pronouns, use their name! You can also notice if their pronouns are listed on their email signature or business card. Otherwise, if it can be done tactfully, respectfully, and in the right situation, ask.

Recognize that people have great diversity.

I AM WHAT I AM
Just like you, every person is who they say they are, no matter if your experience and understanding of gender is different. Don't assume you can tell if someone is transgender.

Respect, honor, and affirm transgender people's identities.

WHEN IN DOUBT, TALK NEUTRAL
If necessary, there are ways to talk in gender-neutral terms, and to talk around pronouns: substituting the person's name for pronouns, and using "they" instead of "he" or "she." You can also use phrases that do not imply gender like "that person."

AFFIRM
Support transgender people in social environments by validating their names and pronouns around others. Include transgender people in gendered activities and space, yet be willing to provide gender-neutral environments.

Reach out to transgender people with inclusive language like, "all genders welcome," or "...identified persons" (e.g.—Open for all woman identified persons.).