

Pronouns 101

What is a pronoun?

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. For a refresher on what pronouns are and when to use them, take a listen to the Schoolhouse Rock song “Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla.”

***Pro Tip:** Don't call them “preferred” pronouns because most often it is not a preference it is just that person's pronouns.

Common pronouns and how to use them

S	O	P	PP	R
ae	aer	aer	aers	aerself
e/ey	em	eir	eirs	eirself
fae	faer	faer	faers	faerself
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
xe	xem	xyr	xyrs	xemself
ze/zie	hir	hir	hirs	hirself
ze/zie	zir	zir	zirs	zirself

Feel free to practice pronouns you may be unfamiliar with or don't use often by placing them in the sentences below:

Subjective: ____ had a really great weekend.

Objective: Please pass ____ this card.

Possessive: This is ____ semester calendar.

Passive Possessive: The bike is ____.

Reflexive: The student introduced ____.

***Pro Tip:** Practice is key. Practice using pronouns you are less familiar with by using the sentences above or making up your own. Pets and stuffed animals can be good to practice with since they don't care about the construct of gender or what pronouns you use for them. Here is an app that can help you practice: <https://pronouns.minus18.org.au/>.

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Why are pronouns important?

Using the correct pronouns:

- shows you respect the person you are speaking with or about.
- validates the person's identity.

When you misgender someone:

- It can make them feel unsafe, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, dysphoric, or oftentimes all the above.

Six Action Steps You Can Take Right Now!

If you are cisgender, always introduce yourself with your pronouns. It helps normalize the use of pronouns and prevents assumptions.

Hi! My name is John.
I use he/him pronouns.

Practice pronouns you are unfamiliar with.

THEY went to the beach.
ZIE was proud of **ZIRSELF**.
This paper is **EIRS**.
Please give this to **FAER**.
This is **HIR** ice cream.

What pronouns do you use?

Don't assume just because a person looks a certain way that they use certain pronouns. When in doubt and you are in a private space, you can ask. But start by introducing yourself with your pronouns.

If you accidentally misgender someone, apologize (without making the apology about yourself), correct yourself, move on, and try to do better in the future. If someone corrects you on a pronoun say thank you, correct yourself, move on, and try to do better in the future.

Further your education about pronouns and LGBTQ+ topics. Go to events, watch videos, or read articles from folx who identify in the community.



Look at the policies in your school, organization, or group; and make sure they use gender neutral language instead of he or she. See if there is a name in use policy for folx who have changed names but aren't able to do so legally. If policies like these don't exist, start conversations with peers, teachers, or administration to try and make a change.

Contact Us

If you have questions, comments, or need resources, you can email us at lgbtqcenter@uwosh.edu. All of our events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted and can be found on our website at <https://uwosh.edu/lgbtqcenter/>.

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