

Why a pronoun guide?

Some people don't feel like the most common gender pronouns (she/her, he/him) represent their gender identities or expressions because of how they are typically attributed to binary conceptions of sex (male/female) and gender (man/woman). Transgender, genderqueer, and other gender non-conforming people sometimes opt to use other pronouns that better fit their gender identity and expression. Gender-neutral pronouns (for example, they/them, ze/hir, ey/em) provide more opportunities for people with non-binary identities to define themselves.

(Note: You may hear people refer to pronouns as "preferred pronouns." This is no longer ideal language because it implies that a trans person's pronouns are optional or up for debate. Instead, simply say "pronouns.")

How do I know which pronouns to use?

You can't know which pronouns someone uses or what gender they identify as just by looking at them. If you're unsure of what pronouns someone uses, you can simply ask, "What pronouns do you use?"

You can also just refer to the person by their name. For example, "I've invited Morgan to the meeting because Morgan has expertise in marketing."

Note that some people may be ok with more than one type of pronoun. For example, you may hear someone say "my pronouns are she/her/hers or they/them/theirs."

In some cases, transgender and gender non-conforming people may use different pronouns in different spaces depending on their comfort and safety. If you hear people introduce themselves differently in different spaces, follow their lead or ask them where you should use which set of pronouns.

Why is it important to get someone's pronouns right?

Using someone's correct pronoun is one important way to show that you respect their identity. For some trans people, being referred to by the wrong pronoun can be invalidating, hurtful, and humiliating. Furthermore, using the wrong pronoun for someone can even be dangerous if it results in outing them to others who don't know their gender status.

Learning how to use new types of pronouns or learning to use a different set of pronouns for someone you already know can take some getting used to, but it is important that you make the effort.

How should I correct myself and others when we use the wrong pronouns?

Be sure to apologize and correct yourself if you mispronoun someone. This can be a simple, "Sorry, I meant she," and then moving on with the conversation. If you notice a peer mispronoun someone, you can offer a brief correction: "Remember, Sam goes by 'he' and 'him.'"

If you realize after the fact, apologize to the person in private and let them know you'll make every effort to get their pronouns right in future. It's important that the conversation does not become centered on how bad you feel about making a mistake or how difficult and confusing it is for you to get their pronouns right. A simple, "I realized I used the wrong pronoun for you earlier. I'm sorry about that; I'll do better in future" will suffice.

Personal Gender Pronoun Options

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The following chart is a quick reference to gendered and gender neutral pronouns. Several versions of gender neutral pronouns are included. Many others exist, but this chart should help you conjugate any type of pronoun.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive adjective	Possessive pronoun	Reflexive	Pronunciation
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself	Pronounced as it looks
He	Him	His	His	Himself	Pronounced as it looks
Ze	Zim	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	Pronounced as it looks
Sie/Zie	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself	Pronounced: zee, here, here, heres, hereself
Zie	Zir	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	Pronounced: zee, zere, zere, zeres, zereself
Ey	Em	Eir	Eirs	Eirself	Pronounced: A, M, air, airs, airself
Per	Per	Pers	Pers	Persself	Pronounced as it looks
They*	Them	Their	Theirs	Themself	Pronounced as it looks

*Used as a singular personal gender pronoun. Some people object to the uses of plural pronouns as singular on the grounds that it's ungrammatical. In fact, the use of plural pronouns to refer back to a singular subject is not new: it represents a revival of a practice dating from the 16th century. It is increasingly common in current English and is now widely accepted both in speech and in writing. These pronouns are properly used by LGBTQ+ students at FSU.

The best way to learn someone's personal gender pronouns is simply to ask them, while telling them your own. Also, creating a space where personal gender pronouns are publicly seen will show others what you use, show that you have some understanding of gender variance, and provide space to have conversations about gender. Examples of places to have your pronouns listed: email signatures, name tags, resumes, etc.

Ideas for Allies of Transgender and Intersex Communities

1. **Don't assume you can tell if someone is intersex or transgender.** When addressing or speaking about any group of people, speak as though someone in the room might be TG or IS because, well, they might be!!!
2. **Do not tolerate anti-trans or anti-intersex remarks or humor in public spaces.**
3. **Report all anti-intersex or anti-trans harassment to the proper authorities.**
4. **Display positive materials for transgender and for intersex persons.** If possible, display relevant posters or flyers.
5. **Respect the confidentiality** of anyone who comes out to you as intersex, trans, transgender, or gender questioning. If your sense is that the person is "out" to everyone, ask just to be sure. ("Is there anyone with whom you prefer I not share this information?")
6. **Deal with feelings first.** If a person is coming out or dealing with painful experiences, you can help tremendously just by listening.
7. **Know your own limits.** When you have reached the limits of your knowledge or patience, refer the person to an appropriate resource.
8. **Use the pronouns of the gender they feel themselves to be.** For instance, if a person says that she identifies as female, use "she"/"her" – regardless of what kind of body that person may have been born into. If you are not sure which pronouns a person prefers, ask, "Which pronouns would you like me to use / do you prefer?" This is sign of respect and support.
9. **Be patient** with a person who is questioning their gender identity. A person may shift back and forth before deciding on what gender expression best matches their identity. A person may ask to be called by one name one day, and another name another day. **Do your best to be respectful and call the person by the name they request.** Although it can be hard to refer to a person by a new name, a gender questioning person will usually notice and appreciate your concerted effort to respect their wishes.
10. **Never try to tell a person what "category" they fit into.** For instance, if a person tells you that they feel they are "trapped in the wrong body," it is inappropriate to respond with "Oh, that means that you are transgender." A person has often spent their entire life being told what gender they are, and as a means of empowerment a person should be allowed to choose the identities they feel best suit them.
11. Just as there is no one way to be male or female, there is no one way to be trans. Each person will choose a path that they feel is right for them; no one path is better than any other. A way to be supportive of finding this path is to **help a person find the best and most appropriate resources and information to be able to make informed decisions.**
12. **Be aware** that a transgender person who chooses to go through hormone therapy or undergo "sexual reassignment surgery" will have to endure an often times long and frustrating process as they try to seek the mandatory medical approval to receive hormones or surgery.
13. **A person who is transitioning from one gender to another may appear to be overly obsessed with the changes that their body is going through.** For many people these changes are a great relief as they start to develop the body they have always wanted, and each change is a cause to celebrate. **Be patient** as a person explores the changes.
14. While a person's sexual orientation is not directly connected to a person's gender identity, some who are transitioning may question previous understandings of their own sexual orientation and choose a new orientation label for themselves. **Don't assume you know what someone's sexual orientation is or is going to be.**
15. An intersex person may have undergone painful surgeries without their consent that can have permanent effects on their life (e.g. reduced or absent sexual function, increased susceptibility to infections, etc). This nonconsensual violation of bodily integrity can have lasting emotional effects as well. Realize that because of these possibilities, **an intersex person may not want to hear that infant genital surgeries are "for the best" or "necessary,"** since those judgments may ignore values that they hold dear.

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16. **Be wary of assuming that a common genital conformation is better than an unusual one.** Many Intersex persons who have escaped non-consensual genital surgery (and, for that matter, many transgender persons who have altered the appearance of their genitals in an uncommon way) express satisfaction and even delight with their unusual bodies. The message behind genital surgeries is that there is something freakish and unacceptable about uncommon genital conformations, such that the person who has or had those genitals must be a “freak”. Such a message conveys extreme disrespect and can severely damage a person’s self-esteem.
17. **If your family bears or adopts an intersex child, get all the facts before making a decision about whether or not to choose to assign a gender to your child hormonally and/ surgically.** Your (continued..) doctors may strongly pressure you to submit your child to such treatments. Remember that the vast majority of intersex conditions pose no health threat to the child.
18. **The Intersex Society of North America recommends assigning a gender socially but not medically until the child is of an age to declare his or her gender for him- or herself.** In other words, give the child a gender-appropriate (or unisex) name. Stick to one set of pronouns. Advocate for your child in his or her school and insist on respectful treatment. Then, as your child matures, be open to the possibility that your guess as to his or her preferred gender expression may have been wrong; perhaps the child you raised as a boy will come to feel that she’d rather live as a girl/woman. Also be open to the possibility that your child will prefer a complicated and/or non-dichotomous gender expression. More than anything, love your child for who they are.
19. Historically speaking, transgender and intersex people have usually been targets of violence. This tradition continues today and is often based on the idea that gender is a rigid, bi-polar category that cannot be violated. A small but useful way to help change this is to **examine your own ideas of gender stereotypes and challenge those around you to do the same.**
20. **If someone assumes that you are transgender or intersex just because you are an TG/IS ally, don’t rush to deny it.** You might try to determine why someone is asking. If you feel a strong urge to deny it, examine that discomfort and the reasons behind it.
21. Remember: above all, **transgender and intersex people are individual human beings who deserve respect and understanding.**

A Common Language

Cisgender – A person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society. (Also referred to as ‘Gender Normative’).

Cross-dresser – Someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

Drag - The performance of one or multiple genders theatrically.

Drag King – A person who performs masculinity theatrically.

Drag Queen – A person who performs femininity theatrically.

FTM / F2M - Abbreviation for female-to-male transgender or transsexual person.

Gender Identity – A person’s sense of being masculine, feminine, or other gendered.

Gender Variant – A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc.).

Genderqueer – A gender variant person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. Often includes a political agenda to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system.

Intersex Person – Someone whose sex a doctor has a difficult time categorizing as either male or female. A person whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, gonads, and/or genitals differs from one of the two expected patterns.

Trans - An abbreviation that is sometimes used to refer to a gender variant person. This use allows a person to state a gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term is sometimes used to refer to the gender variant community as a whole.

Transgender (Trans) Community – A loose category of people who transcend gender norms in a wide variety of ways. The central ethic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedoms including gender and sexual identity and orientation.

Transphobia – The irrational fear of those who are gender variant and/or the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.

Transsexual – A person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.