

What are your pronouns?

Pronouns: reentering prominence in many people's lives for the first time since grammar school. How do we do them best? What should we avoid?

A couple things to keep in mind up front:

- **Pronouns replace people's names** (e.g., "Sam is nice" ? "He is nice"), so it makes sense to give them the same respect we give people's names.
- **Pronouns add gender**, and all the implicit assumptions and associations we have with gender (e.g., "He is nice" ? "[Everything the listener associates with man] is nice.").
- **We don't *have* to use pronouns, ever.** We can always just use the person's name (or language like "the person"), it just might sound repetitive.

A few ways to ask:

- **Offer your name and pronouns**, which indirectly asks the person you are speaking to share their name and pronouns.
- **Explain why you are asking** (e.g., "I want to introduce you to my friend, and make sure I get your pronouns right. What are they?").
- **Just ask!** "What are your pronouns?" (And be ready to explain why you're asking, or for the person to be confused and need a little coaching)

Confusing language to avoid:

- **“Preferred.”** Generally, this isn’t about a preference; it’s about respectfully referring to someone. But sometimes, like with nicknames, people have “preferred” pronouns (e.g., a person might *prefer* “ze,” but be comfy with “she”).
- **“I use...[pronouns]” or “What pronouns do you use?”** We all “use” a bunch of pronouns when referring to others. And we rarely, if ever, use our pronouns to refer to ourselves [*he wrote, being clever*].

Which pronouns are valid?

- **Whatever pronouns someone tells you**, if you decide that you want to respect them in the ways they are asking to be respected. That’s it. One bullet. We learn hundreds of names, we can learn pronouns if we want.

<https://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2018/04/pronoun-best-preferred-practices/>