

A Guide to Pronouns



MENTOR

WHAT IS A PRONOUN?

A pronoun is a type of noun that you can use in place of a name.

Examples:

- Are **they** still coming?
- Is **she** here?

WHY DO PRONOUNS MATTER?

In English, many pronouns are linked to gender. For people who identify as gender non-conforming, non-binary, or transgender, being referred to by the incorrect pronoun can be an extremely invalidating experience with severe repercussions.

A 2018 study conducted by researchers at the University of Texas and published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that, when transgender youth were allowed to use their chosen pronouns and names, their rates of depression and suicide were dramatically reduced.

CHOOSING WHAT PRONOUNS TO USE

Never assume that you know what pronouns a person uses - when you are unsure, ask!

- If you can't ask, use their name or they/them. They/them pronouns can be used to refer to individual people and, because they are not gendered, are many people's chosen pronouns!
- People's pronouns may change over time, so it never hurts to check in!

Remember that sharing your pronouns does not entitle you to know other people's pronouns. If someone is uncomfortable sharing, it is important to respect that.

TIPS FOR USING PRONOUNS INCLUSIVELY

Even if you are cisgender (meaning your personal identity and gender match that of the sex you were assigned at birth), including your pronouns when introducing yourself is important! It can help normalize the practice and create a space where others feel free to share.

Consider adding your pronouns to your email signature, business card, Zoom name, social media bios, etc.