

PRONOUNS



A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (like I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). The English language (as well as many others) has gender-specific personal pronouns, traditionally “he/him/his” for the masculine and “she/her/hers” for the feminine. Some folks, especially trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals choose to use gender neutral pronouns, such as “they/them/theirs”, “ze/zir/zirs”, or “per/per/pers”.

Singular “They”?

Contrary to popular belief, the use of the pronoun “they” to refer to a single person has existed in English speech and writing for centuries. Because most of us are taught when we’re learning to read and write not to use “they” as singular, it can definitely be hard to wrap your head around. When you first meet a person who uses “they” pronouns, it will probably have to be something you are very conscious about practicing. However, I can *promise* you that you already use singular “they” every single day - just unconsciously! Think about phrases like “Did someone leave their coffee cup at the table?” or “I’ll call them back when I have a second.” Normal!

A person’s pronouns don’t always “match up” with their gender identity and/or expression! Just like gender identity, you can’t know (and therefore shouldn’t assume) what a person’s pronouns are unless they tell you.

COMMON PRONOUNS & HOW TO USE THEM

He/Him/His:

"He smiled."

"I called him."

"That coat is his."

She/Her/Hers:

"She smiled."

"I called her."

"That coat is hers."

They/Them/Theirs:

"They smiled."

"I called them."

"That coat is theirs."

Ze/Zir/Zirs:

"Ze smiled."

"I called zir."

"That coat is zirs."

Per/Per/Pers:

"Per smiled."

"I called per."

"That coat is pers."

Ze/Hir/Hirs:

"Ze smiled."

"I called hir."

"That coat is hirs."

Name only

Someone who goes by name only does not want others to use pronouns at all. If this person’s name was Cal, you would say: “Cal ate Cal’s sandwich because Cal was hungry.”