



What are gender pronouns?

Pronouns represent how an individual wants to be referred to. Many, but not all, people use pronouns that reflect their gender identity.

How do pronouns and adjectives vary by gender?

- **She/her/hers** refer to people who identify as women. For example:
 - *She* is sitting at the desk.
 - I saw *her* at the desk.
 - It is *her* desk.
 - The desk is *hers*.
- **He/him/his** refer to people who identify as men.
- **They/them/theirs** can be used by people who do not identify exclusively as women or men or who do not want their gender to define how they are referred to.
 - Some people use both *she* and *they* or *he* and *they* pronouns.
 - You can also use *they* pronouns to refer to someone whose pronouns you do not know. “They” can correctly be used as a gender-neutral pronoun to refer to any person.

Why are pronouns important?

Referring to an individual by the wrong pronouns is a common way we may fail to respect who someone is. Many people do not identify their gender with the sex they were assigned at birth.

How can we make sure we refer to people by the correct pronouns?

If someone tells you they use certain pronouns, show your respect by referring to them by those pronouns.

- If you do not know a person’s pronouns, you can:
 - Share your pronouns and ask what pronouns they use.
 - Refer to an individual by their name (for example, say “*Xena* is a new member of our team” instead of “*He* is a new member of our team”).
 - Refer to people by gender-neutral pronouns (for example, “This is *Xena*. *They* are a new member of our team”).
- Give everyone opportunities to share their gender pronouns.
 - Put your gender pronouns in your email signature (for example, “*Xena* Wallace, Public Health Advisor, pronouns *he/him/his*”)
 - Give people the option to share their pronouns during meeting introductions, and lead by example (for example, “Hi, I’m *Xena* Wallace, I use *he/him* pronouns”).
- If you realize you referred to someone by the wrong pronoun, you can quickly correct yourself: “Sorry, I meant *he*.”
- If you hear a colleague use the wrong pronoun for someone, you can gently point out, “Actually, *Xena* uses the pronoun *he*.”

If people rarely get your pronouns wrong, that is a privilege you enjoy. Share that privilege by working to make sure we all refer to other people by the pronouns they use.

Developed by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group’s Transgender and Nonbinary Workplace Inclusion Committee.