

# The Transgender Training Institute

## Understanding and Using Personal Pronouns

### What are Personal Pronouns?

Personal pronouns, or third-person pronouns, refer specifically to words that we use instead of using somebody's name in a sentence. (ex: he, him, his, she, her, hers, they, them, theirs).

### Why are Pronouns Important?

Words and language are fundamental to the ways most people understand and navigate the world. The words we use to talk about people, specifically trans and non-binary people, can be very important. Pronouns are what an individual identifies with. Not only is it respectful and affirming to use the right pronouns for someone, but it also helps to shape the way you think about that person.

She/Her/Hers/Herself	They/Them/Theirs/Themself	He/Him/His/Himself
<u>Most commonly used</u> for and by women	<u>Most commonly used</u> by people who are non-binary or don't identify as exclusively men or women	<u>Most commonly used</u> by and for men
<i>She went to her local grocery store to get food for herself.</i>	<i>They went to their local grocery store to get food for themselves.</i>	<i>He went to his local grocery store to get food for himself.</i>

### Important Facts About Singular "They"

- ★ The singular they is already a common part of the English language when referring to somebody whose gender is unknown Ex: Somebody left their bike here, I hope they come get it tomorrow!
- ★ Some people might get confused with the use of singular they, as many were raised being taught that "they" needs to be plural. It's important to note that language does shift and change over time and that singular "they" has been in use since at least the 14th century.



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## Multi-Pronouns

Some folks use different combinations of pronouns.

*"I use she/her or they/them interchangeably"*

*"I use they/them some days, and he/him other days."*

## Neo Pronouns

Neo pronouns are not officially recognized but have a long history. They are just as valid.

*"My pronouns are ze/hir."*

*"You can use xe/xem pronouns for me."*

## No Pronouns

Some folks don't want any pronouns used for them.

*"Please only use my name when speaking about me."*

*"Pronouns don't feel affirming."*

## Asking for Pronouns

If you're not sure what pronouns to use for someone – it's okay to ask! You can introduce your pronouns every time you give your name. **"Hi, I'm Shelby, I go by she/her pronouns."** This opens the invitation for another person to name their pronouns. You can ask somebody **"What pronouns do you use?"** or **"What pronouns do you want me to use for you?"** It's best to keep asking everyone their pronouns, and not just the people you think might be trans and/or non-binary.

## What if I Mess Up?

If you use the wrong pronoun: **apologize, correct it, and then move on.** Avoid continually talking about how bad you feel for making the mistake, as it makes the person feel like they need to make you feel better. If you forget someone's pronoun, follow this protocol: apologize, correct it, and move on.

## What if I Hear Other People Use the Wrong Pronouns?

If you notice other people using the wrong pronoun for a person, **try to correct it** by saying something like "Actually, Mel uses the pronoun they." This can be done in the moment, or afterwards in a 1 on 1 setting. If you have a friend who is often mis-pronounced, ask them if they are ok with you correcting people in front of them, or if they prefer that you do it in private away from them.

## Resources to Learn More

- **Pronouns - Transgender Training Institute, Inc.**
- **MyPronouns.org Resources on Personal Pronouns**
- **Getting Comfortable with Pronouns Mini Webinar with Transgender Training Institute, Inc.**

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