

What is the Deal with Pronouns?

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You may have been in a meeting or introduced to someone and they have shared the pronouns they identify with. If you have ever wondered what this is all about, let me share an overview.



Pronouns are used as a substitute for someone's name, and they are often based on assumptions about the person's gender, appearance, or name. When we use the pronouns a person identifies with, it shows respect and gives them dignity. When we make pronoun or gender assumptions, it can feel

disrespectful and alienating, especially when we don't get it right. Most importantly, using correct pronouns is about suicide prevention. **According to the Trevor project (<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>), the attempted suicide rate is cut in half for transgender and non-binary youth who have their pronouns respected.**

When you share your own pronouns, it not only identifies you for others, but also shows support for the transgender community. In addition to verbal introductions, you can share your pronouns on your e-mail signature line, nametags, and business cards.

Why do some people refer to themselves as "they"? They/them pronouns can be used by a singular person who does not identify as a man or a woman (we can call this non-binary). If the use of they/them to refer to one person seems foreign to you, it can be helpful to remember that how we use language evolves over time. It may just take some practice to get used to it!

Finally, if you use the wrong pronouns for someone, just apologize, correct yourself, and move on!

The information in this article was sourced from the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center of Michigan State University. For a more detailed explanation and additional resources, go to: <https://gscs.msu.edu/education/pronouns.html>