

## What are Preferred Gender Pronouns & Why Do They matter?

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We cannot know what someone's gender is by simply looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronoun is one of the most basic ways to show respect for their gender identity. When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can cause them to feel disrespected, invalidated, and dismissed. While mistakes happen, sometimes people intentionally use the wrong pronoun to hurt individuals. This intentional, and repeated, misgendering can be a source of great distress.

A preferred gender pronoun is the pronoun that a person chooses to use for themselves. Gender pronouns can look like and are not limited to:

_____ laughed.	Ask _____!	That's _____ pen.	That pen is _____.
He	him	his	his
She	her	her	hers
They	them	their	theirs
Xie	hir	hir	hirs
Yo	yo	yos	yos
Ze	zir	zir	zirs

So how do I know what someone's pronoun is? Try asking! "What are your gender pronouns?" or "Which pronouns do you use?" or "Can you remind me which pronouns you use for yourself?" It might be awkward and uncomfortable at first but getting it wrong or making a harmful assumption is worse.

Mistakes happen. It may be difficult to adjust to using someone's correct gender pronouns. If you accidentally misgender someone, just say sorry and continue the conversation using the correct pronouns. For example: "Sam is visiting from college this weekend. She – sorry, they said they were really looking forward to spending time with family."

Still have questions? There are a lot of great resources out there – just ask!

