

## What's in a Pronoun?

Gender pronouns are words that others use when talking to or about individuals. The most commonly used pronouns are “he/him/his” and “she/her/hers.” People who are transgender (trans\*) or gender nonconforming (non-binary\*) may choose to use pronouns that don't conform to binary male/female gender categorizations, such as “they/them/theirs and Zie/Hir.

## Why Pronouns Matter.

Using a person's chosen name and desired pronouns is a form of mutual respect and basic courtesy. Starting the conversation at an organizational level about understanding and using people's correct gender pronouns helps ensure an inclusive culture where all voices are given equitable power.



## If you don't know what pronoun to use, listen first.

Be respectful when you ask a person which pronoun they prefer. Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so.

## What happens if I use the wrong gender pronoun for someone?

If you realize it in the moment, correct yourself. Apologize and restate the correct pronoun, as in, “Sorry, I meant she.” If you realize your mistake after the fact, apologize in private and move on.

## Take an active role. Rethink gender on forms and documents.

Consider using a blank space for people to fill in, rather than boxes marked “male” and “female,” or make it clear that people can fill in forms in a way that matches their gender identity. Review your union policies, collective agreements and constitution and replace gendered language with them, they, theirs.

# TALKING ABOUT PRONOUNS

Gender identity is each person's internal and individual sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. Personal names and pronouns are two fundamental ways we express gender and how others perceive our gender. Traditional gender pronouns (she/her, he/him) do not fit everyone's gender identity.

The words people use to describe themselves and others are very important. The right terms can affirm identities and challenge discriminatory attitudes. The wrong ones can disempower, demean and reinforce exclusion. This is as true today for non-binary gender pronouns like “they” as it was for the evolution of the feminist movement and the use of the term “Ms.” or a married woman's family name. (Ontario Human Rights Commission)



Trans\* is an umbrella term which describes people whose gender identities and expressions are not fully defined by the gender they were assigned at birth. Trans\* people may identify as one, none, or with several of the following gender-related identities: Agender, androgyne, bigender, gender fluid, genderfree, genderless, genderqueer, intergender, multigender, neutral, neutrois, non-binary, third gender, trans\*, transgender, transsexual, trans man, trans woman, and two-spirit, among others.

Non-binary\* gender identity is any gender identity that does not fall within the strict categories of contemporary Western societies, which typically consider gender to be binary, e.g., either man or woman.

## DELEGATE

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SAMPLE

MY PRONOUN(S) IS/ARE:

