

Pronoun Sharing Best Practices

Share your pronouns everywhere:

- on your email signature
- on social media
- on video name tags (e.g., Zoom, Teams)
- on name tags
- when introducing yourself

Self-identification is the key

We recommend that pronoun sharing be encouraged but not mandatory.

Not every person is an ally and we don't want false signals of inclusion being made. As well, not every person feels safe to share the pronoun that they truly identify with.

We also recommend that you do it with a clear understanding of why you are doing it. Without that, it can become an insincere gesture.

Why do people share their pronouns?

- To help create an inclusive environment
- So that people will know one another's pronouns without having to guess or make assumptions
- To avoid being misgendered (i.e., having your gender identified incorrectly)
- To act as an ally in solidarity with people who get misgendered and/or who use neopronouns

Hi, my name is Fauzia and I use they pronouns.

Nice to meet you, my name is Jac and I use she pronouns.



Don't assume you can tell someone's gender by looking at them



Hello

Xiaoping
he/they



Wait – What are pronouns again?

Personal pronouns are short words we use to refer to someone instead of using their names. When we talk about sharing pronouns, we are referring to sharing third person singular pronouns like *ey*, *he*, *she*, *they*, *xe*, *ze* or *zie*, etc. For instance, “*Ey* has joined the soccer team.” “*She’s* our coach.” “*He* scored a goal.” “*Zie* won athlete of the year.”

What’s a *neopronoun*?

Aren’t there just two singular pronouns: *he* or *she*?

What other pronoun options are there and what do they mean?

- **He and she** are two pronouns among many.
- **Neopronouns are personal pronouns other than ‘he’ and ‘she’.** Examples include: *they* (singular), *xe*, *zie*, *ey*.
- **Neopronouns do not map onto specific identities.** One person who uses ‘*they*’ may have a different identity from the next person who uses ‘*they*’. Every individual can choose whichever pronoun(s) resonates for them. Self-identification is the key!

How do you share your pronouns?

There are many ways to share your pronouns. If it’s written you put them after your name, here are some of the approaches you can consider:

- **ey, em, eirs**
- **il/he** (some people who are bilingual will put their pronouns in French and English)
- **she, her**
- **they**

**Pronouns:
ey, he, she, they, xe,
ze, and many more!**

It doesn’t really matter how long or short it is. The key is to create inclusion by the act of sharing.

When sharing your pronouns verbally, you can say, “*hi*, I’m [your name] and I use [pronoun] pronoun. This could sound like this, “*hi*, I’m Manon and I use *they* pronouns.”

Isn’t the pronoun ‘*they*’ only used in the plural?

No. ‘*They*’ can be used in the singular or plural and this has been the case for over 600 years. More recently, it was officially endorsed by the APA Style Guide for use in the singular and won the Merriam-Webster Dictionary ‘Word of the Year Award’ in 2019.

**They = Word of
the Year Award**





Can a person have more than one pronoun?

Yes. People might use more than one pronoun (e.g., they and she; he and ey; all pronouns; or any other combination). Where and when each pronoun gets used is up to the individual. Sometimes this is done for safety reasons (e.g., repercussions at home, work, school, etc.). In other cases, individuals might simply identify with more than one pronoun.

Is it true that some people do not use a pronoun?

Yes. Some people ask that you use their name rather than a pronoun.

Can't I tell someone's pronouns just by looking at them?

No. When we look at someone and think we know their pronoun, we are basing it on their gender expression. Gender expression (sometimes called gender presentation) is the combination of ways that they dress, style their hair, walk, talk, act, accentuate or de-accentuate body parts, etc. Gender expression and gender are not the same thing. Both are protected grounds from discrimination under federal human rights legislation and most provincial and territorial human rights acts/codes.

There are many reasons why someone's gender expression might not align with the gender that you expect:

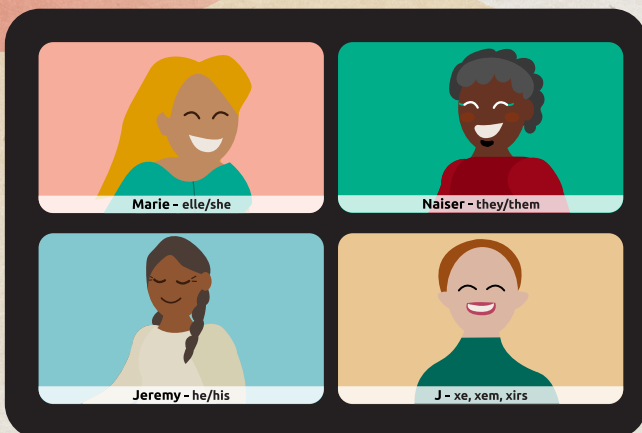
- It may not be safe for them to express their gender authentically
- You may not have a cultural context or other type of frame of reference to be able to interpret correctly
- They may not be able to afford the clothes that they want
- They may be experimenting or fluid with their gender expression or have their own unique gender expression
- Until we have an opportunity to find out from an individual what their pronouns are, we are guessing based on assumptions and might get it wrong.

Sharing pronouns =
Allyship, Solidarity,
Leadership

Why can't boys be boys, and girls be girls?

They can. Since everyone's gender is valid and real, everyone has the right to use ey, he, she, they, xe, ze, zie or whatever pronoun(s) is the best fit for them.

There are many gender identities that exist. Some terms include agender, genderfluid, genderqueer, Indigiqueer, man, nonbinary, pangender, queer, transman, transwoman, Two Spirit, woman and additional possibilities. Sharing pronouns is about valuing all genders, not just two genders.



Language is always evolving and you can too!

But I never get misgendered – Why should I share my pronouns?

It's easy to think that pronouns are unimportant if you're someone who can take them for granted. By sharing your pronouns, you use your position of relative safety to interrupt assumptions. You share some of the load of the social repercussions for talking about pronouns at all. Sharing your pronouns is also a visible sign of allyship with people who experience marginalization on a daily basis.

What if I don't want to share my pronoun(s)?

If you don't want to share your pronoun(s) or would feel unsafe sharing your pronoun(s), then don't. Be open to learning more about pronouns from individuals who do share their pronouns and/or those who get misgendered regularly. You can always add your pronouns later if you choose. **Choosing not to share your pronouns does not give you permission to complain about the practice of sharing pronouns.**

Are neopronouns only in the English language?

No. The use of neopronouns is increasingly common in languages that have gendered pronouns. Interestingly, the vast majority of languages worldwide do not have gendered pronouns.

What if I make a mistake?

What if I call someone by the wrong pronoun?

Accept and acknowledge that you made a mistake. If someone else corrected you, then thank them. Do a quick, "sorry about that", then use the correct pronoun and commit to getting it right in the future.

Where can I find out more information?

- **2SLGBTQI+ Inclusion in Sport: Key Terms to Understand / How to be an Ally (Special Olympics Canada):**
https://www.specialolympics.ca/sites/default/files/SOC_DiversitySeries-2SLGBTQA-web.pdf
- **Pronouns (MyPronouns.org):**
<https://www.mypronouns.org>
- **Pronoun Usage Guide (Egale):**
<https://egale.ca/awareness/pronoun-usage-guide/>
- **Inclusive Language (Special Olympics Canada):**
https://lms.coach.ca/specialolympics/diversityandinclusioninaction-en/story-content/external_files/Special-Olympics-Inclusive%20Language-web.pdf

