



# Why Pronouns Are Important!

**Validate the person's present gender-respect and use their chosen name and pronouns!**

When we use pronouns like "she" or "he" to identify a person **we might be making an assumption** about that person's gender that differs from their *actual gender identity*.

Some people have an ambiguous gender expression, meaning **you might not know which pronoun to use just by looking at them** and you might feel compelled to make an assumption.

For other people, *appearances can be deceiving--* **even people who clearly look to be one gender may identify as a different gender** than you might assume.

It is always better to **ask** what pronouns someone uses rather than making an incorrect and potentially hurtful assumption.

## What do you mean by gender-neutral pronouns?

Gendered pronouns are those that indicate gender: he, she, him, her, hers, his, himself and herself. All others, like "one," and "they," are gender-neutral. You probably already use some gender-neutral pronouns: they, their, and them.

## Why would people feel uncomfortable about a gendered (male or female) pronoun?

For many people, gender is simple and clear-cut: either gender identity aligns with biological sex or gender presentation falls closely enough within traditional norms that most people assume the appropriate "he" or "she." Many other individuals, however, present their gender identity and expression ambiguously, causing traditional assumptions about gender to be irrelevant or incorrect.



## Aren't There Only Two Genders?

We have been conditioned to only recognize two genders: male and female (this is known as the gender binary). There are, in fact, many more genders. There are a spectrum of various gender identities and expressions that exist beyond the binary.

Everything in life exists on a fluid continuum... and gender is no exception. Proposed 3<sup>rd</sup> gender pronouns such as ze, hir, hirs, and xe, xem, xyrs are commonly used to express a gender outside of the binary.

## How do we avoid making incorrect assumptions about gender pronouns?

ASK! Or, use gender-neutral pronouns, like "they" and "them."