

	Subject	Object	Pronoun	Pronunciation
Gender Binary	she	her	hers	as it looks
	he	him	his	as it looks
Gender Neutral	they*	them*	their*	as it looks
	ze	hir	hirs	zhee, here, heres
	ze	zir	zirs	zhee, zhere, zheres
	xe	xem	xyr	zhee, zhem, zhere

*\*used as singular*

### **Inclusive Practice: Pronoun Usage** by Donna Braquet

With the new semester beginning and an influx of new students on campus, it is important to participate in making our campus welcoming and inclusive for all. One way to do that is to use a student's chosen name and their correct pronouns. We should not assume someone's gender by their appearance, nor by what is listed on a roster or in student information systems. Transgender people and people who do not identify within the gender binary may use a different name than their legal name and pronouns of their gender identity, rather than the pronouns of the sex they were assigned at birth.

### **Introductions**

In the first weeks of classes, instead of calling roll, ask everyone to provide their name and pronouns. This ensures you are not singling out transgender or non-binary students. The name a student uses may not be the one on the official roster, and the roster name may not be the same gender as the one the student now uses. This practice works outside of the classroom as well. You can start meetings with requesting introductions that include names and pronouns, introduce yourself with your name and chosen pronouns, or when providing nametags, ask attendees to write in their name and pronouns.

### **Gender-neutral pronouns**

We are familiar with the singular pronouns she, her, hers and he, him, his, but those are not the only singular pronouns. In fact, there are dozens of gender-neutral pronouns. A few of the most common singular gender-neutral pronouns are *they*, *them*, *their* (used as singular), *ze*, *hir*, *hirs*, and *xe*, *xem*, *xyr*.

These may sound a little funny at first, but only because they are new. The *she* and *he* pronouns would sound strange too if we had been taught *ze* when growing up.

**How do you know?**

How do you know what pronoun someone uses? If you cannot use the methods mentioned above, you can always politely ask. “Oh, nice to meet you, [insert name]. What pronouns should I use?” is a perfectly fine question to ask.

The more we make sharing of pronouns a universal practice, the more inclusive we will be as a campus. When our organizational culture shifts to where asking for chosen names and pronouns is the standard practice, it alleviates a heavy burden for persons already marginalized by their gender expression or identity.

**Learn more**

To learn more about gender identity, gender-neutral pronouns, or transgender topics, consider signing up for a Safe Zone workshop at [safezone.utk.edu](https://safezone.utk.edu).