

Tip Sheet on Pronouns

What are pronouns and why are they important?

Pronouns (such as she/her, he/him, they/them) are an integral part of how we refer to ourselves and others. It's important not to make assumptions about people's gender based on their appearance or their name. Giving our pronouns helps avoid uncomfortable situations for everyone, but especially for gender diverse people.

Why should I introduce myself using my pronouns and/or add pronouns to my email signature?

Proactively adding your pronouns to your email signature, wearing a pronoun pin, or displaying your pronouns on a nametag, are small gestures that can have a real impact in creating an inclusive work environment. As Egale Canada notes, "Making assumptions about someone's gender identity can often lead to exclusion and harm. Learning to ask for and use someone's pronouns is a small step in treating 2SLGBTQIA+ people with decency and respect."

It helps avoid misgendering which "involves attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect/ does not align with their gender identity. [Misgendering] often occurs when using pronouns, gendered language (i.e., "Hello ladies!" or "Hey guys"), or assigning genders to people without knowing how they identify." (From the **Guidelines for Respecting, Accommodating and Supporting Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation in our Schools**, PEI Department of Education and Early Years).

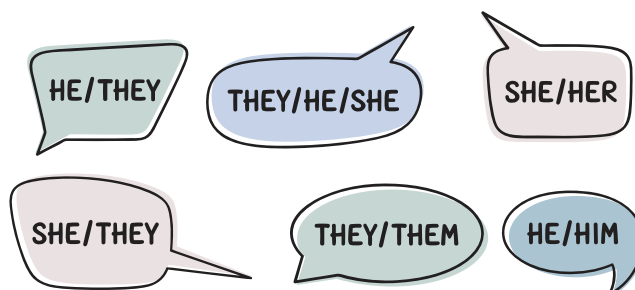
If it's so important, why isn't there a policy that makes people add their pronouns?

Sometimes people are not comfortable disclosing their pronouns, or "coming out" to people at work. We wouldn't want to force anyone to do something that makes them uncomfortable.

What do I do if someone is upset that I asked them their pronouns?

Some people may not feel comfortable sharing their pronouns with you, and that is okay. As Pride Health Nova Scotia notes, "While there are some people that may be confused or even offended by being asked, it's important to remember that there are people who will feel safer receiving care from you because you asked!"

If someone gets upset about being asked for their pronouns, you could say something like: "I ask everyone about their pronouns to make sure that I'm referring to people the way they want to be referred to."



More resources on pronouns:

<https://egale.ca/awareness/pronoun-usage-guide/>

<https://www.peitn.com/for-health-professionals>

Why Pronouns Matter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRh7j2g95HU>

<https://www.inhersight.com/blog/allyship/pronoun-email-signature>