



For information about UWM's fall semester plans, visit the [Fall 2020 Reopening website](#).

Site Menu 



Gender Pronouns

ON THIS PAGE

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Pronouns – A How To Guide](#)

[Gender Neutral / Gender Inclusive Pronouns](#)

[History of Gender Inclusive Pronouns](#)

First, let's start off with the most frequently asked questions about Personal Gender Pronouns (PGPs).

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I make a mistake?

Why is it important to respect people's pronouns?

What are some commonly used pronouns?

What is a pronoun?

Pronouns – A How To Guide

Pronouns-- A How To Guide

Subject: 1 laughed at the notion of a gender binary.

Object: They tried to convince 2 that asexuality does not exist.

Possessive: 3 favorite color is unknown.

Possessive Pronoun: The pronoun card is 4.

Reflexive: 1 think(s) highly of 5.

**The pronoun list on the reverse is not an exhaustive list.
It is good practice to ask which pronouns a person uses.**

© 2011, 2016 UW-Milwaukee LGBT Resource Center

1	2	3	4	5
(f)ae	(f)aer	(f)aer	(f)aers	(f)aerself
e/ey	em	eir	eirs	eirself
he	him	his	his	himself
per	per	pers	pers	perself
she	her	her	hers	herself
they	them	their	theirs	themself
ve	ver	vis	vis	verself
xe	xem	xyr	xyrs	xemself
ze/zie	hir	hir	hirs	hirself

Note: the top line is meant to indicate two separate – but similarly spelled – sets of pronouns. They are ae/aer/aers and fae/faer/faers.

Gender Neutral / Gender Inclusive Pronouns

A gender neutral or gender inclusive pronoun is a pronoun which does not associate a gender with the individual who is being discussed.

Some languages, such as English, do not have a gender neutral or third gender pronoun available, and this has been criticized, since in many instances, writers, speakers, etc. use “he/his” when referring to a generic individual in the third person. Also, the dichotomy of “he and she” in English does not leave room for other gender identities, which is a source of frustration to the transgender and gender queer communities.

People who are limited by languages which do not include gender neutral pronouns have attempted to create them, in the interest of greater equality.

HE/SHE	HIM/HER	HIS/HER	HIS/HERS	HIMSELF/HERSELF
zie	zim	zir	zis	zieself
sie	sie	hir	hirs	hirself
ey	em	eir	eirs	eirself
ve	ver	vis	vers	verself
tey	ter	tem	ters	terself
e	em	eir	eirs	emself

History of Gender Inclusive Pronouns

Native English Pronouns

ON THIS PAGE

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Pronouns – A How To Guide](#)

[Gender Neutral / Gender Inclusive Pronouns](#)

[History of Gender Inclusive Pronouns](#)

“Ou, a”: Native English Gender-Neutral Pronouns. According to Dennis Baron’s Grammar and Gender:

In 1789, William H. Marshall records the existence of a dialectal English epicene pronoun, singular *ou* : "'Ou will' expresses either *he* will, *she* will, or *it* will." Marshall traces *ou* to Middle English epicene *a*, used by the fourteenth-century English writer John of Trevisa, and both the OED and Wright's English Dialect Dictionary confirm the use of *a* for *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, and even *I*.

The dialectal epicene pronoun *a* is a reduced form of the Old and Middle English masculine and feminine pronouns *he* and *heo*. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the masculine and feminine pronouns had developed to a point where, according to the OED, they were "almost or wholly indistinguishable in pronunciation." The modern feminine pronoun *she*, which first appears in the mid twelfth century, seems to have been drafted at least partly to reduce the increasing ambiguity of the pronoun system....

He goes on to describe how relics of these sex-neutral terms survive in some British dialects of Modern English, and sometimes a pronoun of one gender might be applied to a person or animal of the opposite gender.

Language Authorities

“One”

In 1770, Robert Baker suggested use of “one, ones” instead of “one, his”, since there was no equivalent “one, hers”. Others shared this sentiment in 1868, 1884, 1979, and even now. Others throughout this period disagreed, finding it too pedantic.

“His or Her” vs. Singular “They”

Around 1795, the language authorities Lindley Murray, Joseph Priestly, and Hugh Blair, amongst others, campaigned against pronoun irregularities in pronoun use, such as lack of agreement in gender and number. Without coining words, this can only be done in the third

person singular by use of compound terms like “his or her”. Grammarians in 1879, 1922, 1931, 1957, and the 1970s have accepted “they” as a singular term that could be used in place of “he” or “he or she”, though sometimes limiting it to informal constructions. Others in 1795, 1825, 1863, 1898, 1926, and 1982 argued against it for various reasons. And whatever the grammarians might argue, people have been using the singular “they” for about the last 600 years, though (as mentioned earlier) it can only be applied in certain cases. If new gender-neutral pronouns are not adopted, i’m sure that singular “they” will still be a point of contention for centuries to come. For further information on the use of singular “their” throughout the centuries, see the [large body of information](#) that Henry Churchyard has compiled on the subject.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

SUPPORT

Allies

Coming Out

Crisis Support

Gender Pronouns

Health and Wellness

Housing and Restrooms

Integrating Identities

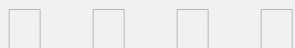
LGBT Veterans

People of Color

Relationships and Sex

Trans @ UWM

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) Resource Center



[Programs](#) | [Services](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Support](#) | [Resources](#) | [About Us](#) | [Invest in Us](#)

©2020 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee