

## Pronouns: What they are and why they matter

She/her, he/him, they/them. We use pronouns to describe each other all the time. Most people don't actively choose their pronouns because they align with their gender identity.

For a cis woman, her sex is female, her gender is woman, and her pronoun is she/her.

For someone gender non-conforming, transgender, agender or intersex these assigned pronouns may not feel aligned with their gender identities. It is vital to respect someone's chosen pronoun and/or name (a former name no longer in use is often referred to as a dead name). Many people who are in the middle or completely outside of she/he identities chose to use the gender neutral they/them pronoun. This simply substitutes in for she/her or he/him in concept and grammatically. The excuses abound of why people refuse to refer to someone in their life as by they/them:

1. "It's too hard."
2. "It's unnatural."
3. "It's not that big of a deal."
4. "It doesn't make sense grammatically, it's plural."

None of those are good or valid excuses to not try! Everyone will mess up and that's okay, but messing up a handful of times in the beginning indicates effort, safety and respect. In response to those reasons why it's an obstacle to use the gender-neutral pronoun, I would ask you to consider these points:

1. It's really not. We easily learn to call newlywed people by a new last name.
2. Language evolves. This is an evolution of language. Everything feels "unnatural" at first but then becomes normalized. We created language so we can change it.
3. Think about if everyone in your life began calling you by the opposite pronouns than your gender. You'd feel pretty bad, wouldn't you?
4. Someone lost their wallet. There you did it, singular they.

