

PRONOUNS 101

WHAT IS A PRONOUN?

A pronoun is a word used to refer to either the people who are talking (like “I” or “you”) or a person being talked about in the third person (like “she/her,” “he/him,” and “they/them”). Since some pronouns are gendered (“she/her” and “he/him”), it is important to be intentional about the way we use pronouns as we all work to create as inclusive an environment as possible.



WHY DO PRONOUNS MATTER YOU ASK?

How many times someone has used your name or a pronoun to refer to you today? Chances are this has happened countless times. Now, imagine that your coworker, or a family member, or a friend routinely calls you by the wrong pronoun. That would be taxing and can be considered microaggression. Using a person’s chosen pronouns is essential to affirming their identity and showing basic respect.

She/Her/Hers

She is here now.

Her phone call just started.

She excused herself from the meeting.

That seat is hers.

Let's wait for her.

He/Him/His

He is here now.

His phone call just started.

He excused himself from the meeting.

That seat is his.

Let's wait for him.

They/Them/Theirs

They are here now.

Their phone call just started.

They excused themselves from the meeting.

That seat is theirs.

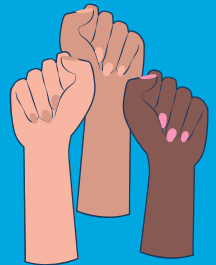
Let's wait for them.

PRONOUN ETIQUETTE TIPS

Create opportunities for people to share their pronouns with you rather than assuming you know their pronouns based on their appearance.

For example, when introducing yourself share your pronouns like this:

- In one-on-one conversation: “Hi, I’m John and I go by he/him. Nice to meet you.”
- In a meeting: “Hi everyone. I’m Mollie. I’m the senior program manager and I go by she/her.”
- In your e-mail signature next to your name: *E. Wilson* (pronouns: *they/them/theirs*).



HOW DO I ASK?

If you don’t know someone’s pronouns, it’s okay to ask. You can say, “What pronouns do you use?” or “What pronouns do you go by?” or “What pronouns would you like me to use when I refer to you?”



PRACTICE

You will likely make some mistakes. If you make a mistake, own it, apologize and move on. Help others by gently correcting them

Got Questions? Contact us: dcps.equity@k12.dc.gov | Follow Us @DCPSEquity

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