

Pronoun Practice!

Most of us grew up speaking about gender in a binary way—utilizing the assumption that people could only identify as a man or a woman, and thus could only use “he” or “she” pronouns.

Learning to speak in a trans-inclusive way can be like learning a second language. For most of us, it requires practice in order to gain fluency and feel comfortable using non-binary pronouns. This worksheet is to help practice speaking and thinking with non-binary pronouns.

Non-binary pronouns are pronouns other than “he/him/his” and “she/her/hers.” Mastering speaking with non-binary pronouns helps to show respect to trans people by addressing people whose pronoun we don’t yet know, without assuming how they identify. Importantly, it also helps us to address people whose pronoun we *know is non-binary*.

The following are some examples of non-binary pronouns:

They/Them/Theirs

They go to the store. I bought **them** a soda. That’s **their** soda. That’s **theirs**.

Ze/Zir/Zirs

Ze goes to the store. I bought **zir** a soda. That’s **zir** soda. That’s **zirs**.

Spellings of ‘ze’ vary. You may also see it written as ‘zie’, ‘sie’, ‘xie’ or ‘xe’. All versions are pronounced *zee*. Zir is pronounced *zeer*.

Ze/Hir/Hirs

Ze goes to the store. I bought **hir** a soda. That’s **hir** soda. That’s **hirs**.

Spellings of ‘ze’ vary. You may also see it written as ‘sie’, ‘zie’, ‘xie’ or ‘xe’. All versions are pronounced *zee*. Hir is pronounced like “*here*.”

Some people who are genderqueer or gender non-conforming use a mix of pronouns. Talking about them might sound like this:

Amal uses a mix of ‘he’ and ‘she’ pronouns: *Amal likes his coffee hot but his tea cold. She’s very particular about her morning drinks!*

Some genderqueer or genderfluid people use one pronoun at a time, but vary their pronoun from time to time. Talking about them might sound like this:

(This week) Kamil is using ‘they’ pronouns right now: *Kamil said they wanted pepperoni on their pizza.*

(The next week) Kamil is using ‘he’ pronouns right now: *Kamil never uses his cellphone during dinner.*

Some people don't want anything to do with pronouns!—A person might prefer you to just use that person's name when talking about that person. Talking about that person might sound like this:

Farouk uses Farouk's name in place of pronouns: *Farouk went to Farouk's doctor to pick up test results. Farouk's doctor gave Farouk some hard news, and Farouk needed some support after seeing the results so Farouk called me.*

Some genderqueer or non-binary people use “she” pronouns or “he” pronouns even though the pronouns are not non-binary because those are the pronouns that feel the most comfortable. For some people those pronouns may correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth. For other people, those pronouns may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth. Talking about them might sound like this:

Sara uses ‘he’ pronouns: *Sara took his dog for a walk.* Miguel uses ‘he’ pronouns: *Miguel fed his cat dinner.*

Non-binary options for pronouns are as varied and diverse as genderqueer and gender non-conforming people are. And new language is being invented and reclaimed all the time! What's important is not knowing EVERY SINGLE PRONOUN OUT THERE EVER, but respectfully asking each person how they would like to be addressed, and then using those pronouns when speaking about them. If their pronouns are new or challenging to use, it's a good idea to practice (in private, on your own time) so that you reduce the chances of making a mistake. That said, we all make mistakes sometimes. If that happens, simply apologize, use the *right* pronoun and move on (and then practice later!)

A Note on Privacy: Some people prefer different pronouns in different spaces. Some may go by non-binary pronouns around communities that know the person identifies as trans, and may go by “he” or “she” in settings where it may be dangerous the person to be “outed” as trans. It may be good to check-in with the person to see how they prefer to be addressed in different settings.

Gender Pronouns

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

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Non-binary Exercises

Practice changing the following phrases into sentences using the non-binary pronouns indicated whenever possible. Then, read the sentence out loud, adding more sentences after if you like.

Ex. Jamal / came with me to the movies but forgot wallet (They)

Jamal came with me to the movies but **they** forgot **their** wallet.

(Spoken) *Jamal came with me to the movies but **they** forgot **their** wallet, so I bought **their** ticket for **them**. Otherwise **they** would have missed the movie!*

They/Them/Their/Theirs

They go to the store. I bought **them** a soda. That's **their** soda. That's **theirs**.

Tre'Andre/called mother

Angela/missed last appointment

Jones/fell off bike

Miriam/couldn't find shoes to fit

Kadisha/painted a portrait of self

Corey/watered plants and then went for a run

Geo/turned in homework a week later than should

Ze/Zir/Zirs

Ze goes to the store. I bought **zir** a soda. That's **zir** soda. That's **zirs**.

Moe/floss teeth every night

Tara/is a therapist and specializes in trauma

Diego/takes coffee with cream

Feli/practices dance with a friend on days off

Luna/went to catholic school when growing up

Ze/Hir/Hirs

Zie goes to the store. I bought **hir** a soda. That's **hir** soda. That's **hirs**.

Nate/sees a psychiatrist for support managing epilepsy

Janet/sister co-owns a parrot with [Janet]

Cris/We threw [Cris] a surprise party for birthday

Simone/does best work when listening to Salsa music

Yvette/doesn't like it when you call by nickname

[Name]/ [Name]/ [Name's]

Porsha goes to the store. I bought **Porsha** a soda. That's **Porsha's** soda. That's **Porsha's**.

Natalie/went to corner store but said would be back soon

Chioma/got paycheck and immediately paid rent

Greg/is very good at drawing when in the mood

Jai/is a spoken word poet, have you heard any of the pieces?

Eli/sometimes misses appointments because forgets about them
