

Guidelines for Use of Pronouns at University of Arizona

Background

We are excited to announce that students will now be able to designate the pronouns they use within UAccess. It is a [suggested best practice](#) from the [Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals](#) to allow students to indicate the pronouns they use for themselves and for those to appear on course rosters, grade rosters, and advisor lists. We are delighted to bring this capability to our campus.

In the vein of the University's commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all people, it is important to use the pronouns for people that they use for themselves, it is a cornerstone of conveying respect. One aspect of employing gender-inclusive language is using someone's pronouns. In other words, this means that when you refer to a person, you use pronouns that are reflective of their gender identity and that they want others to use to reference them. Just as you cannot assume someone's gender identity, you cannot assume the pronouns that someone would like to be referred to by based on their appearance. For more information on the importance of pronouns, check out this resource: <http://libguides.library.arizona.edu/LGBTQClassroom>

Setting a Pronoun on UAccess

Check out this tutorial on how to change you pronouns in UAccess:

<http://registrar.arizona.edu/sites/registrar.arizona.edu/files/Pronoun%20tutorial.pdf>

Pronouns will be used in the following systems and records:

- Instructor photo roster
- Student Services Center staff

FAQs

1) *What is a pronoun?*

A pronoun is a set of words in language that are used as substitutes or in reference to nouns (Merriam Webster). For example:

“Alex is over there. Let's say hello to her!”

In the above sentence, “she” is a pronoun in reference to Alex.

When talking about people, pronouns are significant because of the ways in which they might reflect gender. People often identify with certain pronouns but not others. It is important not to make assumptions about what a person's pronouns might be based on their name or gender presentation. You can only know what someone's pronouns are unless you ask them.

2) What are some examples of different pronouns someone might use?

Subject Pronoun	Object Pronoun	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive Pronoun	Examples
She	Her	Her/hers	Herself	Jay is a student, and she went to class. The teacher gave her a test. Her responses were good. She studied by herself.
He	Him	His	Himself	Jay is a student, and he went to class. The teacher gave him a test. his responses were good. She studied by himself.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves/ Themselves	Jay is a student, and they went to class. The teacher gave them a test. Their responses were good. They studied by themselves.
Xe	Xem	Xyr	Xemself	Jay is a student, and xe went to class. The teacher gave xem a test. Xyr responses were good. Xe studied by xemself.
Ze	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	Jay is a student, and ze went to class. The teacher gave zir a test. Zirs responses were good. Ze studied by zirself.

3) Why is respecting someone's pronouns important?

Using someone's pronouns is a cornerstone of respecting that person. [Misgender](#) is using pronouns or other gendered language to refer to someone in a way that does not reflect their gender identity. This can have many negative effects, including contributing to [gender dysphoria](#). Misgendering can also threaten an individual's physical safety.

4) How can you know someone's pronouns?

Just as you [cannot know someone's gender identity](#) simply by looking at them or hearing their name, you also cannot know someone's pronouns through assumption. The only way you can know the

pronouns that someone uses for themselves is by them telling you. While it is a suggested best practice to [ask a person what pronouns that they use](#), this can be uncomfortable for some people to do in person. This is one of the reasons why the University of Arizona has added a pronoun designation to UAccess.

5) *Why is the language of “pronouns” being used instead of “preferred gender pronouns (PGPs)”?*

Sometimes, in conversations about transgender identity, pronouns are referred to as “preferred gender pronouns” (PGPs); however there has been movement away from this language because the word “preferred” implies that someone could elect to use pronouns other than the ones a person has chosen for themselves. This, however, is not the case.

6) *What if I am uncomfortable or unsure of how to use a person’s pronouns?*

Some people are uncomfortable using pronouns that they are not familiar with (e.g. pronouns such as they/them/theirs (to refer a singular person) or xe/xem/xyrs). In other instances, people who have gotten used to using one set of pronouns in reference to a person might be resistant to changing their language if that person transitions to using a different set of pronouns. Not respecting a person’s pronouns for any reason is not okay, and using someone’s pronouns is a vital part of respecting their identity. Very often, for transgender individuals, choosing one’s pronouns is an important part of the coming out process and of being open about their gender identity. It can also be a matter of physical and emotional safety.

That said, you are uncomfortable or unsure of how to use a person’s pronouns, an alternative (that doesn’t in turn involve [misgendering](#) that person) would be simply using that person’s name to reference them.

If you want to use someone’s pronouns but are unsure of how, check out this website where you can practice!

<https://www.practicewithpronouns.com/#/?k=5v1630>

7) *What if I make a mistake?*

Mistakes absolutely happen to all of us! If you use the incorrect pronoun for someone, the best thing to do is to correct your error quickly and then to move on. Making a big deal out of the mistake only calls more attention to the situation, which can be uncomfortable. Depending on the situation, you might apologize to the person privately after the fact, but do not make this apology profuse and prolonged. Being accountable and more diligent in the future is the best course of action!