

Appropriate Pronouns

So what does it mean if people do not fit within the binary as we have always understood it? You can't judge a book by its cover, and you cannot always guess a gender by how someone presents. One way to honour the identity of nonbinary people is to use the pronouns that they have chosen for themselves. This is as easy as asking what they prefer, when you find a private moment with them. Simply ask "What pronouns do you prefer?"

Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, people choose to use gender neutral pronouns. These function exactly like he/him and she/her in a sentence. Most common neutral pronouns include the singular they/them. There are also newly created words (neologisms) such as ze/zir, which are pronounced "zee" and "zeer".

Some reasons that people choose to use gender-neutral pronouns include

- to demonstrate a nonbinary, trans, genderqueer, agender, gender fluid, creative and/or gender questioning identity;
- to indicate that gender is not relevant in many contexts, or to make a political statement about gender;
- to act in solidarity with a friend or loved one who uses gender neutral pronouns.

Check out this handy pronoun reference sheet! Consider posting this in your classroom as a reminder to yourself and students that there are many inclusive ways to refer to each other. If you teach ELA, consider having students use different pronouns in their writing as a way to become more familiar with the variations.

Figure 4

Pronoun Reference Sheet

She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
He	Him	His	His	Himself
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves
Ze	Zir	Zir	Zirs	Zirself
Xe	Xem	Xyr	Xyrself	Xemself
Ze	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself
Per	Per	Per	Pers	Perself

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THINK ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS:

How do you believe that students with diverse gender identities or gender expressions feel in your school and classrooms?

How can you be more inclusive of the gender spectrum in your teaching practice?