

### **What is a personal gender pronoun (PGP)?**

Personal gender pronouns refer specifically to people that are being talked about (he/him/his; she/her/hers; they/them/their; xir/xie; etc.). We have moved away from the language of "preferred pronouns" because gender identity is not a preference but a reality. Using "preferred" can imply that using the correct pronouns for someone is optional.

### **What kind of pronouns can be used?**

There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language, so it's best to ask people what pronouns they use. Some people prefer to not use pronouns, and would like their names to be used instead.

### **Why is it important to respect pronouns as faculty?**

We can't always tell someone's gender identity or their pronouns by outward appearances. By respecting students' and colleagues' pronouns, we set an example in our university community. When someone is referred to by the wrong pronoun, it can make the person feel disrespected and alienated. Honoring people's pronouns is a simple way to show that we want to cultivate an environment that respects all gender identities.

### **How should I ask what someone's pronoun is?**

It's best not to put students, colleagues, or staff on the spot, but rather to give an opportunity for everyone to provide pronouns if they would like. Two ways to do this are to have students fill out index cards with their names, contact information, and pronouns; or to include pronouns as an optional part of group introductions (e.g. "tell us your name, where you're from, and, if you would like, what pronouns you use"). You can also let students know that they can tell you individually, which some students may feel more comfortable doing. Outside of the classroom context, for staff, other faculty, or students, we could ask, "what pronouns do you use?" or "what should I call you?" or introduce yourself first and use your name and pronouns.

### **What if I make a mistake?**

That's okay! If you use the wrong pronoun, thank the person for reminding you, correct it, and then move on. Avoid continually talking about how bad you feel for making the mistake, which can put the person on the spot. If you forget someone's pronoun, follow the same protocol: correct it and move on. If other students or faculty are using the wrong pronoun for a person, try to correct it by saying something like "Actually, Alex uses 'she.'" If students or faculty continue to use the wrong pronoun, do not ignore it. It might help to ask the person who has been misidentified if they would like you to take the other person aside and remind them of the proper pronoun. Steps like this let the person know you are an ally.

### **How else can I be proactive around this topic?**

You can include your pronouns in your email signature or add them to your class syllabus, and substitute inclusive language such as "everybody," "folks," or "this person" for gender binary language like "ladies and gentleman," "boys and girls," "he or she," etc. If possible, it's also

helpful to let students introduce themselves on the first day of class, rather than calling roll from your UIS roster.

adapted from

[diversity.caltech.edu/documents/2972/preferred\\_gender\\_pronoun\\_guide\\_4twaPpX.pdf](https://diversity.caltech.edu/documents/2972/preferred_gender_pronoun_guide_4twaPpX.pdf)