

Personal Pronouns and Names at HSHV

1. What Are Personal Pronouns and Names?

Pronouns are a language tool used either to refer to someone when speaking directly to each other (I, you), or referring to a person in a conversation (he, she, they). Pronouns are used as identifiers for many people and things; it's important to realize that pronouns are not only used by transgender, nonbinary, or otherwise identifying individuals. Cisgendered people also use pronouns.

Personal pronouns are the pronouns that a person is associated with, usually tied to their gender identity. Personal pronouns are the way that you refer to someone in conversation without using their name. For example:

"I love working with Ali, they are so awesome!"

There are a wide range of pronouns that people may identify with! You may often see them written as she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs or others., You may also see combinations of pronouns, such as she/they, they/he, etc. Some people may even be comfortable with any pronouns or only using their name. The chart below (from the LGBTQIA resource center at UC Davis) shows several pronouns you could see:

___ laughed.	Ask ___!	That's ___ pen.	That pen's ___.	Did ___ enjoy ___?
co	co	cos	cos	coself
en	en	ens	ens	enself
ey	em	eir	eirs	emself
he	him	his	his	himself
she	her	her	hers	herself
they	them	their	theirs	themselves
xie	hir ("here")	hir	hirs	hirsself
yo	yo	yos	yos	yoself
ze	zir	zir	zirs	zirsself

Personal names are the name(s) that a person would prefer to be called. This can be simply a nickname, shortened version of their legal/given name, or it can be a different name entirely.

2. Using personal pronouns and names:

Using any person's personal pronouns and preferred names is an important matter of respect for another human being. If someone introduces themselves with a certain name, or certain pronouns, you should use that name and pronouns unless you are informed of a change from that person.

3. Being mindful of personal pronouns and names may be a new practice for some people, and even if it's not, some may struggle with the process. Here's some tips to help:

1. Using the correct pronouns/name for someone is a show of respect and can help to create an inclusive culture in our organization.
2. As a step towards an inclusive culture, you can include your preferred name and pronouns in your introductions! Not only does this create a more inclusive space, but it also keeps transgender and nonbinary individuals from being singled out by sharing their pronouns. Including pronouns in your introductions can look like this: "Hi, my name is Grace and my pronouns are she/her/hers".
3. Use neutral language when referring to a group of people. Saying "Hello Everyone" instead of "Hello Guys" or "Hello Ladies" can go a long way to make someone feel included in a space. Using this type of neutral language also prevents you from assuming someone's gender based on appearances. When writing communications, try using "they" instead of "he/she" - there are more options than just those two pronouns!
4. If you make a mistake, quickly apologize, correct yourself, and move on.
 - a. Do not make a big deal out of it- that can make it more awkward for you and the other person/people involved.
 - b. If you realize your mistake later, apologize in private. Bringing it up in front of other people could unnecessarily call the person out or make everyone involved uncomfortable.
5. If you are struggling, practice using the correct pronoun(s)/name. Take some time by yourself to imagine having a conversation with or about the person or repeat their correct name and pronouns while picturing their face in your head.
6. If you're not sure, ask! Never assume someone's pronouns or preferred name based on appearance, personality, or anything else.



7. Respect privacy! No one owes you their gender identity status. Even if you decide to make an inclusive step by providing your pronouns in your email signature, introductions, etc., that does not mean anyone else needs to share with you. While asking about pronouns is a great step, never expect anything in return, and NEVER ask about someone's journey, medical transitioning status, or other personal information

For more information, check out these resources:

<https://www.npr.org/2021/06/02/996319297/gender-identity-pronouns-expression-guide-lgbtq>

<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/pronouns-inclusive-language>

<https://www.cultureamp.com/blog/gender-pronouns-in-workplace>

<https://www.zenefits.com/workest/4-best-practices-for-using-pronouns-in-the-workplace/>

<https://www.adp.com/spark/articles/2021/06/best-practices-for-using-pronouns-in-the-workplace-and-everyplace.aspx>

PLEASE NOTE: This is not an exhaustive guide to equitable treatment of LGBTQIA+ individuals. This is meant as an introduction to those who are seeking guidance into the use of personal pronouns and names.