

## **PSA: Pronouns**

### Pronoun Guide

This guide is created to help anyone learn how to use people's correct pronouns. Everyone in your community should engage in learning, educating, and advocating for the inclusive use of pronouns for all.

### What Are Pronouns?

Pronouns are the words you may like others to use for you in place of your proper name. Some examples include "she/her" or "he/him" or gender-neutral pronouns, such as "they/them." Here is an example of using "they/them" in a sentence: John is substituting for me today and they are an incredible mathematician. Singular "they" pronouns have been used in the English language for centuries. If you are still struggling with using this, remember, it takes practice!

### Why Focus on Pronouns?

You may have noticed that people are sharing their pronouns in introductions, on name tags, and at the beginning of meetings. This gives everyone in the room the opportunity to self-identify instead of assuming someone's identity or which pronouns they use. Including pronouns is a first step toward respecting people's identity and creating a more welcoming space for people of all genders.

### How Is This More Inclusive?

Pronouns can sometimes be a signifier for someone's gender identity, but not always. We do not want to assume people's gender identity based on expression (typically shown through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms etc.) By providing an opportunity for people to share their pronouns, you're showing that you're not assuming that their gender identity is based on their appearance.

### Mistakes and Misgendering

Misgendering refers to the experience of being labeled by others as a gender other than one that a person identifies with. Because many (not all) associate their pronouns with their gender identity, using the wrong pronouns intentionally or unintentionally is a form of misgendering. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun when identifying someone, please apologize or say "thank you", and immediately use the right pronoun,

i.e. "This is Alex, she is one of my science students."

(you are corrected because Alex uses they/them/theirs pronouns).

"Sorry, they are one of my science students" or "Thank you, they are one of my science students."

Everyone makes mistakes; please take accountability for your mistake and start using the correct pronoun. The important thing to be mindful of is to not unload your guilty feelings on transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people or expect forgiveness. They might have a strong reaction to the misuse of their pronouns and need space to recenter themselves.

### Tips for Gender-Neutral Language

Practice, practice, practice! Use gender-neutral pronouns such as “they” while visualizing the person who uses them. This is especially useful to do right before you’re about to see the person.

When addressing groups of people or people whose pronouns you haven’t been told, use gender-neutral language such as, “siblings,” “third graders,” “students,” “friends,” “folks,” “all,” or “y’all,” rather than “brothers and sisters,” or “guys,” “ladies,” “ma’am,” or “sir.”

Use descriptive language if you do not know a person’s gender, pronouns, or name. e.g. Can you give this paper to the person across the room with the white t-shirt and short brown hair?

*This text is adapted from the 2020 GLSEN Pronoun Guide: <https://www.glsen.org/activity/pronouns-guide-glsen>*

**PSA: Neutral**

The choice to spay or neuter your pet may be one of the most important decisions you make impacting their long-term health—and your wallet!

Your pet's health and longevity

The average lifespan of spayed and neutered cats and dogs is demonstrably longer than the lifespan of those not. A study conducted by Banfield Pet Hospitals on a database of 2.2 million dogs and 460,000 cats concluded that neutered male dogs lived 18% longer, and spayed female dogs lived 23% longer. Spayed female cats in the study lived 39% longer, and neutered male cats lived 62% longer. The reduced lifespan of unaltered pets can, in part, be attributed to an increased urge to roam (exposing them to fights with other animals resulting in injuries and infections), to trauma from vehicle strikes, and to other accidental mishaps. Another contributor to the increased longevity of altered pets is their reduced risk of certain types of cancers.

Curb unwanted behaviors

Intact dogs are more prone to urine-marking than neutered dogs. Although urine-marking is usually associated with male dogs, females may do it too. Spaying or neutering your dog should reduce urine-marking and may even stop it altogether.

For cats, the urge to spray is extremely strong in those not altered, so the simplest solution is to alter by 5 months old before the problem arises. Neutering solves 90% of all marking issues, even in cats that have been doing it for a while. It can also minimize howling, the urge to roam and fighting with other males.

In both cats and dogs, the longer you wait, the greater the risk of the surgery not doing the trick because the animal has practiced the behavior for a longer period of time, thereby reinforcing the habit.

Other behavioral problems that can be alleviated by spay/neuter include:

- Roaming, especially when females are in heat
- Excessive barking and mounting activity

While having your pets spayed/neutered can help curb undesirable behaviors, it will not change their fundamental personalities.

Cut costs

When you consider the potential long-term medical costs incurred for an unaltered pet, the savings afforded by spay/neuter are clear, especially given the plethora of low-cost spay/neuter clinics now available.

Caring for a pet with reproductive system cancer or pyometra can easily run thousands of dollars—five to 10 times as much as a routine spay or neuter surgery. In cases where intact dogs and cats may fight, treatment of their related injuries can also result in high veterinary costs.

Spread the word

By spaying or neutering your pet, you can help protect them against certain illnesses, help address unwanted behaviors, save money, and save lives by reducing overpopulation. Contact your veterinarian or your local low-cost spay/neuter clinic to discuss and/or schedule your pet's appointment, and encourage your family and friends to do the same. If your community does not have affordable, accessible spay/neuter and wellness services available, advocate for this funding so that all pet owners have local access to quality medical care for their pets.

*This text is adapted from The Humane Society of the United States:  
<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/why-you-should-spayneuter-your-pet>*

**Biographical Story 1**

*(underlining added)*

The sky is their/her limit: New astronaut gets ready to travel to the ISS

Ashley Green was born in Chicago in 1990, into a family that always encouraged them/her in their/her interest in science. As a child, Ashley was fascinated by astronomy and stories of space travel. They/She learned to fly a plane before learning how to drive and spent as much time as possible in the sky. Ashley got their/her bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at the California Institute of Technology and their/her PhD in aerospace engineering at Stanford University.

In 2016, Ashley was one of over 18,000 candidates applying to the astronaut training program at NASA, and one of only 10 candidates chosen. Training to be an astronaut takes two years, which Ashley spent flying training jets, learning medical and survival skills, and learning Russian. To get used to zero gravity, Ashley and other recruits flew in a plane that creates around 20 seconds of weightlessness each time it climbs and dives. Because so many people get sick experiencing zero gravity for the first time, astronauts jokingly call this the "vomit comet" or the "weightless wonder." To practice spacewalks, Ashley spent hours working underwater in a massive pool. They/she say/says that astronaut training was exhausting, but it was exciting to be working with such a passionate and talented team.

In two months, Ashley will be lifting off for the first time, headed to the ISS for a four-month stay. They/She will be working with a team of 5 other astronauts from 3 countries. Ashley's primary job will be upgrading and testing robotic tools used to conduct experiments and do maintenance on the ship. Life on the ISS is busy and isolating, but Ashley says they/she are/is excited to be one the few people to see the earth from orbit.

**Biographical Story 2**

*(underlining added)*

An animal-lover's journey to keeping their/his own beehives

James Wright was born in Ohio in 1985. They/he loved animals from an early age, since they/he grew up with their/his family's dogs, cats, chickens, and horses. James began volunteering at the local animal shelter in middle school and caring for foster dogs in high school.

Their/His love of the animal world led James to study biology at The Ohio State University. During this time, they/he also became interested in botany and wanted to learn more about the relationships between plants and animals that exist together in the same environment. A friend recommended a local organization of beekeepers, and James found the perfect combination of their/his interests.

Today, James owns their/his own bee farm, where they/he raise/raises hives to sell to other beekeepers and produce honey. They/He are/is most excited about the free classes they/he run/runs for the community about creating gardens friendly to pollinating insects, caring for your own beehive, and identifying local plants and animals. James hopes to inspire people to learn more about the environments around them and work towards a sustainable future.

Outside of their/his farm business, James is kept busy with their/his 5- and 2-year-old daughters, 3 dogs, and an ever-changing number of cats. They/He also enjoy/enjoys hiking, photography, woodworking, and trying new recipes that use fresh honey.