



WHY DO WE ASK ABOUT PRONOUNS?

It is simply a matter of respect. How you identify in terms of your race, class, sexuality, religion, and gender, among all aspects of your identity should be **self-identified**. That means you should tell me (if you want) how you identify—I should not decide who you are. This then is general diversity value—that you determine what I call you. Gender identity is one of those aspects of identity that I, as a colleague, do not determine for you. That is why people offer their own pronouns.

WHAT ARE PRONOUNS?

They are how we refer to you when not using your name. Options include: they, them, theirs, she, her, hers, he, him, his, zi, zir, zirs, among others!

HOW DO I ASK?

Best way to ask someone their pronouns, offer yours first! Some ways to do that:

- “my pronouns are” / “the pronouns I use are”
- “what are yours” / “what about you?”

We say “what are your pronouns” and “what pronouns do you use” rather than saying “preferred pronouns” because how you identify is not a preference but who you are.

SO THIS IS REALLY AWKWARD FOR ME...

Yes, most of us haven’t grown up allowing people to self-identify aspects of their identity. But we are trying to change that. We promise: practice makes it less awkward.

I THINK THIS GOES AGAINST MY BELIEFS...

Okay, so here is what we ask: that you treat your colleagues and students with respect. Respect means using the pronouns they use for themselves (not the ones you decide to use for them). And we ask that you be open to learning more.

And...PLEASE NOTE:

- Offering pronouns is a way to let people know how to refer to you when not using your name, not for discussing your own or someone else’s gender identity.
- Gendered pronouns may not match a person’s gender identity. For example, as one of our colleagues explains: “I use he and they in settings where I feel like I can. I use she/her with family and in most public settings because it’s easier/safer. My gender identity is trans* and genderqueer but my pronouns might not always indicate that.” Thus, don’t assume someone’s gender identity by their pronouns, just use the pronouns they give you.

For more information on pronouns, diversity trainings, or ODI in general , please contact us at: diverseterps@umd.edu