



South Southwest (HHS Region 6)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



The University of Texas at Austin

Texas Institute for Excellence
in Mental Health

Steve Hicks School of Social Work

CREATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR LGBTQIA2S+ STUDENTS & STAFF IN SCHOOLS

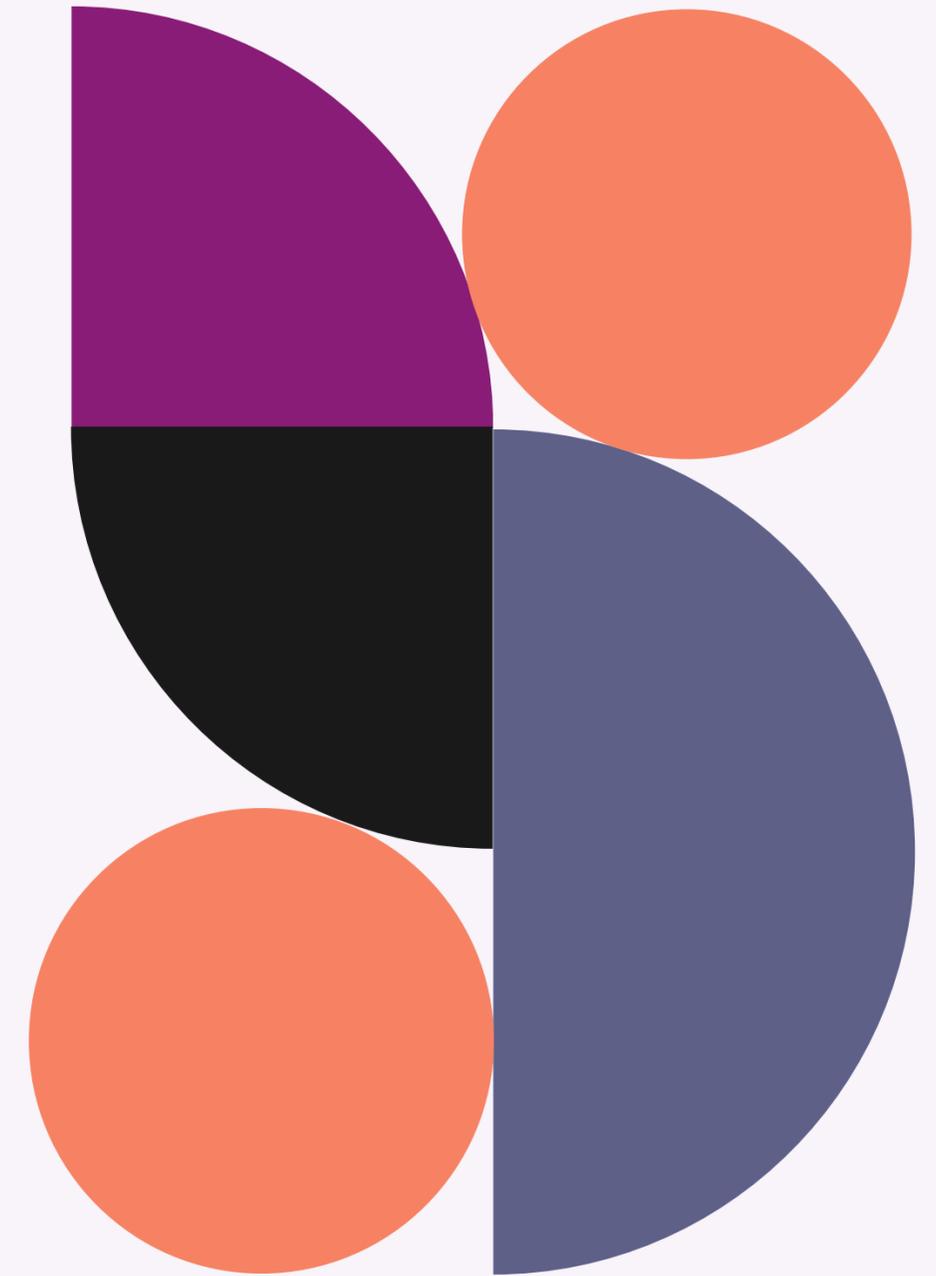
Session #02: What's behind a pronoun?



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FRIENDLY REMINDERS

While we get comfortable, here are a few reminders

01

Chat to chat!

Share your name, pronouns, what's your role is in School Mental Health.

02

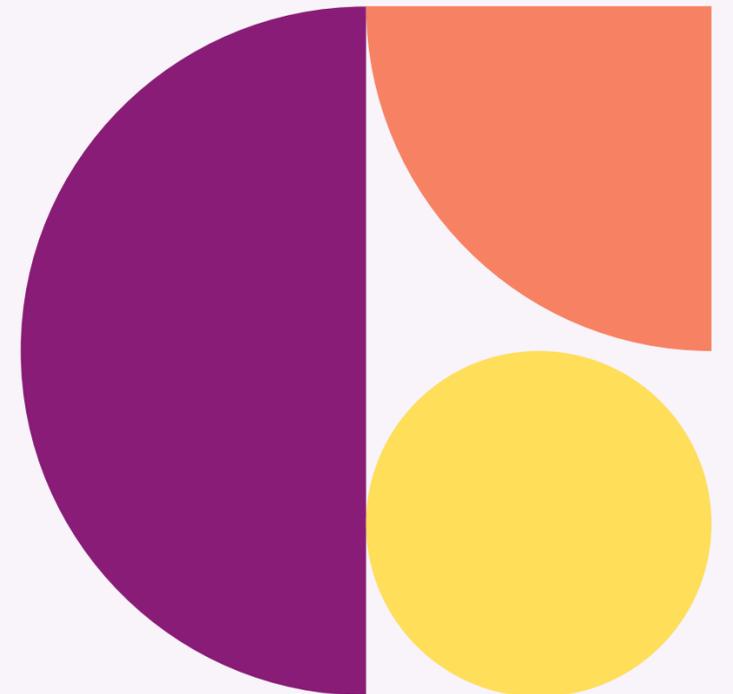
Setting expectations.

We're going to practice, practice, practice.

Break Out rooms are coming up.

03

Feel free to add resources, comments and questions during the entire session.





WHAT ARE PRONOUNS?

A pronoun

/ˈprɒˌnʌn/

is a word that can function by itself as a noun phrase and that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this).

Gender 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 “ze/hir,” [pronounced: zee/heer] or “they/them”.

Some people use specific pronouns, any pronouns, or none at all.

Gender Pronouns

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

Design by Landyn Pan

[t transstudent.tumblr.com](https://transstudent.tumblr.com)
[f facebook.com/transstudent](https://facebook.com/transstudent)
twitter.com/transstudent

For more information,
go to transstudent.org/graphics

TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources

WHY TALKING ABOUT PRONOUNS IS IMPORTANT?



- Respects people's identity.
- Creates a more welcoming and safe space for people of all genders.
- Reduces the risk of suicide and depression in trans and non-binary youth.
- Provides acknowledgement and recognition of non-binary and trans people existence.
- Affirming LGBTQ youth's gender by using pronouns that align with their gender identity has been shown to improve mental health outcomes.



WHY SHOULDN'T WE ASSUME THEM?

Gender Expression

/noun/

- the way in which a person expresses their gender identity, typically through their appearance, dress, and behavior.

Pronouns are part of our gender identity and expression.

Preferred pronouns vs. Pronouns.

LET'S PRACTICE TOGETHER

~ Going to our first breakout room for 5 minutes ~

- Introduce yourself by sharing your name, pronouns, and a *fun* fact about yourself.

- *Hi! I'm Lauren, my pronouns are they/them and I play the guitar.*

- Ask people's names and pronouns in the conversation.

Hi Alex! What are your pronouns?



A FEW HISTORY FACTS ON GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

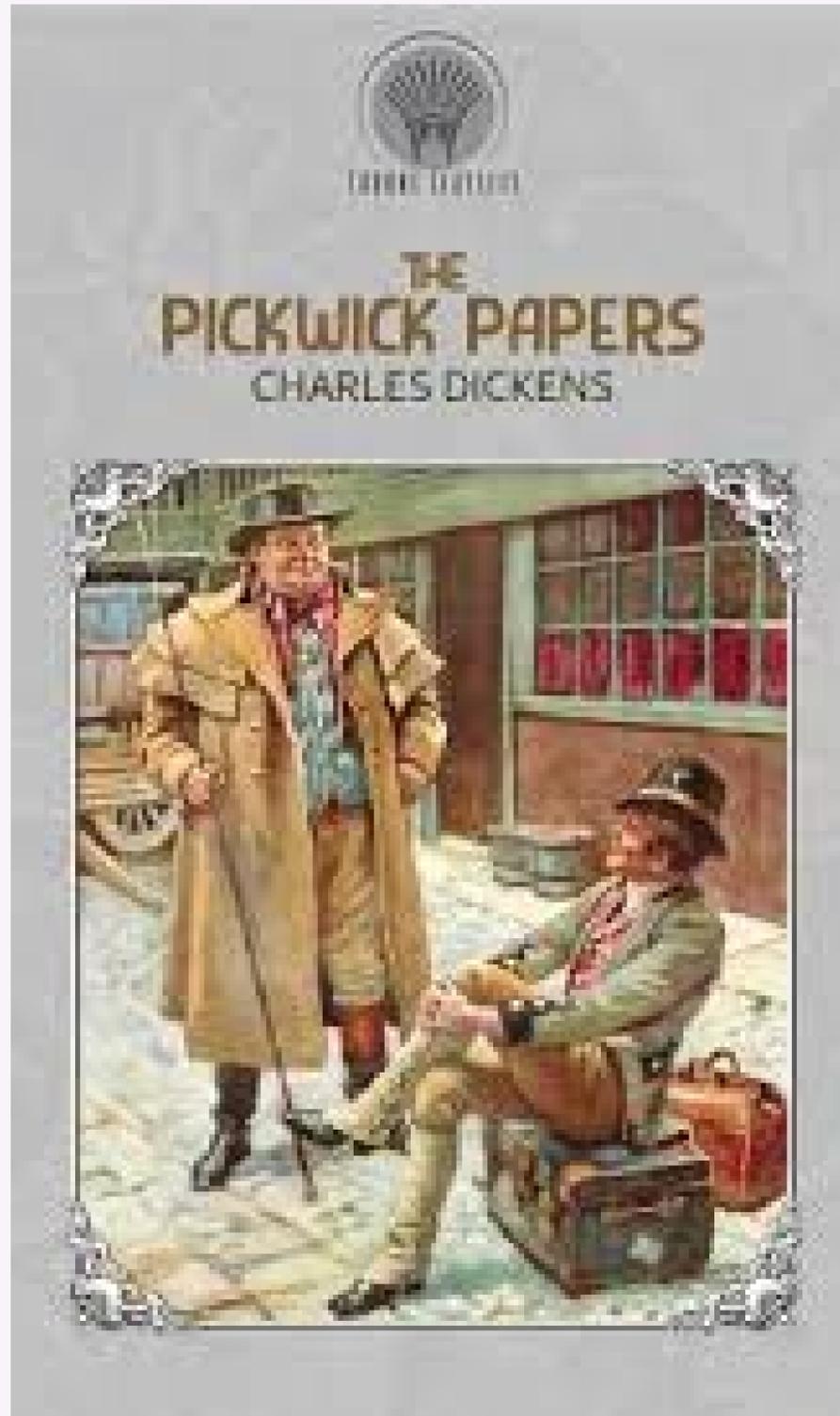
"This is a new trend... it's not going to last"

"it's an invention from the new generations"

"You see this online but not on published books"

According to Dennis Baron, a professor of English and Linguistics at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and author of *What's Your Pronoun?: Beyond He or She*, critical discussions about the use of and need for gender-neutral pronouns date back to the late 18th century.

Gender-neutral pronouns were discussed frequently among local newspapers and periodicals starting in 1789.

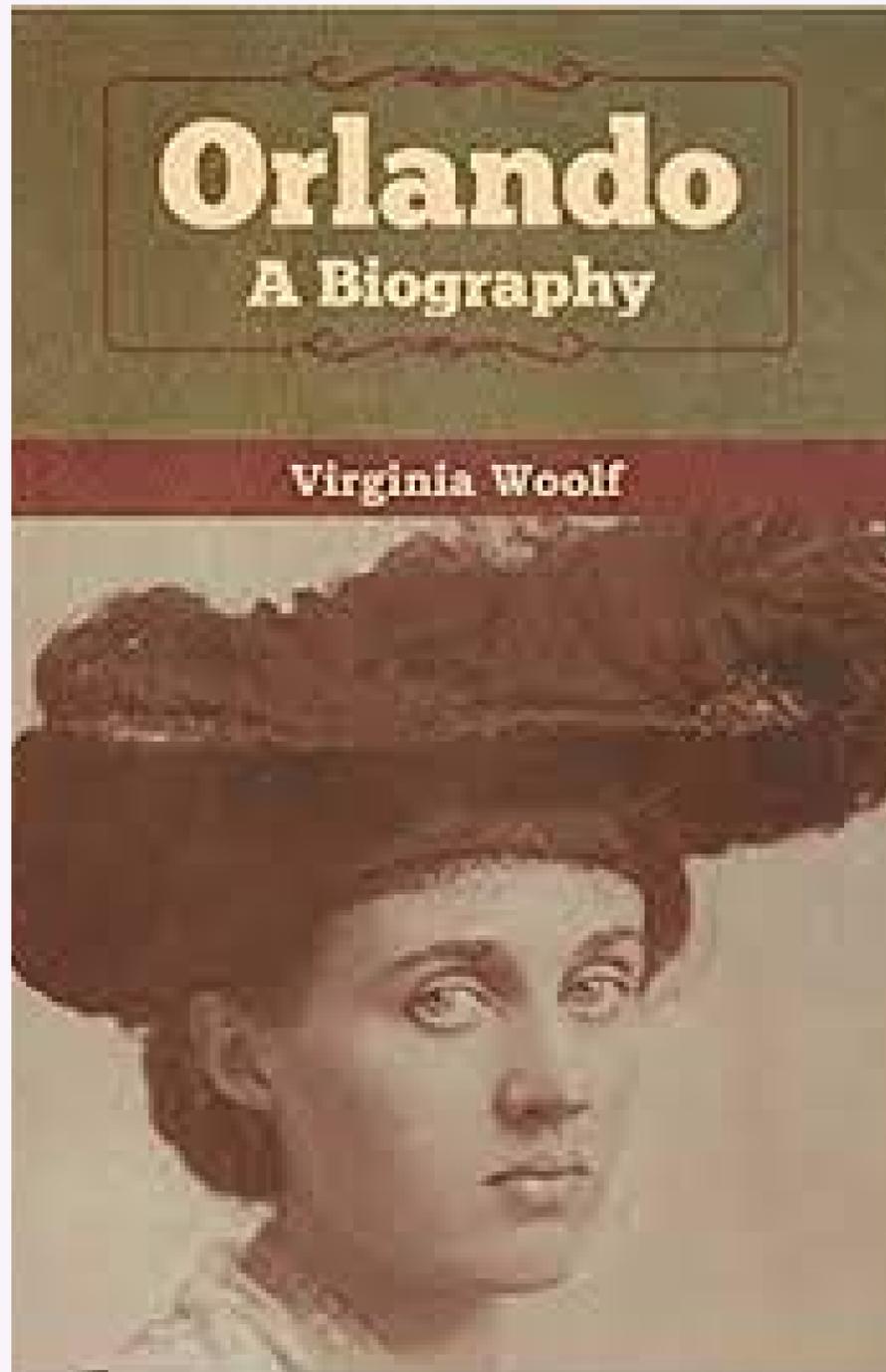


A FEW HISTORY FACTS ON GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

Baron reminds us that: ['They' is] a natural way to use a pronoun to:

- Refer to someone whose gender is unknown or irrelevant.
- Conceal the gender of the person they were talking about because they were gossiping, or
- Protect the person, because revealing the person's identity could put them in danger.

Charles Dickens used "they" to anonymize gender in *The Pickwick Papers*, 1836.



A FEW HISTORY FACTS ON GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

“I’m Orlando. My pronouns are *he, they, and she.*”

Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same. His memory—but in future we must, for convention’s sake, say “her” for “his”, and “she” for “he.”¹³

—VIRGINIA WOOLF, *Orlando: A Biography* (1928)



A FEW HISTORY FACTS ON GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

Baron also explains how the pronoun **'hir'** was coined in 1920 by a newspaper in California, called "The Sacramento Bee," were they tried using that off and on from the 1920s through to the 1940s.

"Ze," which is a pronoun that is often assumed to be a more recently coined term, was created by "a writer identified only as J. W. L." in 1864.

What's clear is that these pronouns have a long history within languages, one that's still evolving today.

HOW DOES THE USE OF PRONOUNS SHOW UP IN THE SCHOOL SETTING?



- **Documents:**
 - Attendance rosters, student IDs, yearbooks, report cards, records.
- **Relationships:**
 - Mom or dad ~ Adults.
 - Brother or sisters ~ Siblings.
 - Girlfriend/boyfriend ~ Partner.
- **Greetings:**
 - Ladies and gentlemen ~ friends, everyone, y'all, guests, folks, colleagues



WHAT ABOUT HONORIFICS?

- The most well-known gender-neutral honorific is **Mx.**
- It is pronounced "Mix." There are many more, including Misc., Msr., Myr., Pr., and Sai. But many people chose not to use honorifics at all, in which case, just stick to their name.
- **There is already a widely accepted one in school settings! Can you guess what it is?**

IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS, NAMES, AND PRONOUNS

There is no law that says schools can only use students' legal names. A legal name probably has to appear on a transcript, but **the school can use a student chosen name and their pronouns on just about everything else: class attendance rosters, student ID, yearbook, report cards, etc.**

WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE AND MISGENDER SOMEONE?



Misgendering refers to the experience of being labeled by others as a gender other than one that a person identifies with. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun when identifying someone,

1. Apologize or say “thank you”
2. Use the right pronoun.

For Example:

- *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.*

WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE AND MISGENDER SOMEONE?



We all make mistakes, and you likely will the first handful of times you're referring to someone by pronouns you're not familiar with. It's okay!

Briefly apologize, correct yourself, and continue the conversation.

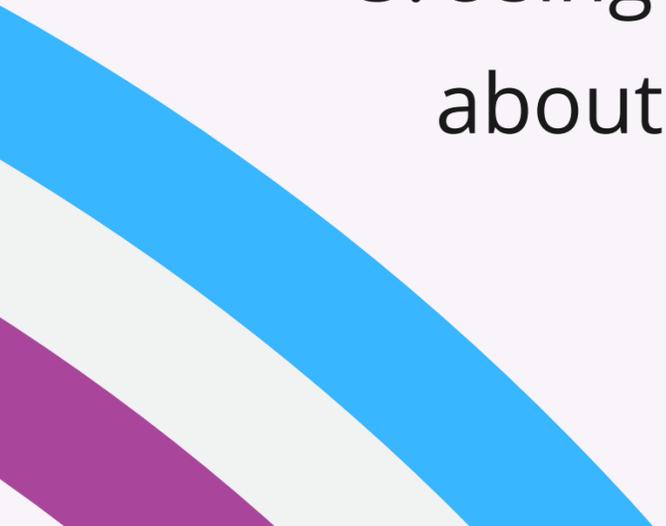
Apologizing profusely can draw unnecessary attention to or cause embarrassment for someone who uses gender-neutral pronouns. Quickly acknowledge your mistake and correct yourself, and then continue on with the conversation.

"I think it's perfectly natural to not know the right words to use at first. We're only human" *Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen, deputy executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality*

LET'S PRACTICE TOGETHER

~ 15minutes ~

Instructions

1. We'll read together a few scenarios where different pronouns are used in school settings.
 2. We'll move you to a breakout room with other 4 participants to choose 1 scenario to practice with.
 3. Using your own role in the school, chat with other participants about this scenario making sure to practice the use of pronouns.
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TO CONTINUE YOUR PRACTICE AFTER THIS SESSION...

Interactive websites to practice and play:

- **Practice with Pronouns:**

https://www.practicewithpronouns.com/#/?_k=2980a1

- **Minus18:** <https://pronouns.minus18.org.au/>



While "They" might be for some...

Recognition,
Respect,
Safety,
Freedom,

is for everyone.



IN ONE WORD...

WHAT'S BEHIND A PRONOUN?



RESOURCES

- GLSEN Pronoun Guide: https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/GLSEN_PronounsResource_2020_Final.pdf
- GLSEN 8 Affirmations for Students Struggling with Pronouns: <https://www.glsen.org/blog/8-affirmations-trans-folks-students-struggling-pronouns>
- Gender-Neutral Pronouns 101: Everything You've Always Wanted to Know: <https://www.them.us/story/gender-neutral-pronouns-101-they-them-xe-xem>
- Pronouns Usage Among LGBTQ Youth: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/pronouns-usage-among-lgbtq-youth/>
- Book: What's Your Pronoun? Beyond He and She. <https://wwnorton.com/books/9781631496042>
- Research: Chosen Name Use is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation and Behavior among Transgender Youth (2018) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6165713/>
- International Pronouns Day Resources: <https://pronounsday.org/resources>
- Pronouns Matter: <https://www.mypronouns.org/>
- Non-Binary and Latinx: <https://youtu.be/E-ccuUFF-Ts?t=297>