

# Why Pronouns Matter

As societal norms continue to evolve, people are placing more weight on the value of self-identification. At SRF, we respect those values and encourage employees to freely share their personal pronouns if they choose.



## What to know

People generally use pronouns to reference each other by something other than their proper name. These third person pronouns have historically implied the gender of the person being referred to. For example, “he/him/his” suggests the subject is a man or boy, “she/her/hers” suggests the subject is a woman or girl.

However, for an increasing percentage of the population, a person’s personal pronouns don’t necessarily reflect their gender in a traditional way. We recognize the fluidity of gender and the importance of not making assumptions based on people’s pronouns, names, or appearance.

Much like addressing people by their preferred names (e.g., “Liz” for Elizabeth or “John” for Jonathan), addressing someone by their shared personal pronouns can show consideration and foster inclusiveness.

If someone has shared their pronouns, they have established how they prefer to be addressed in the third person (e.g., she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs, etc.). Additional sets of pronouns, such as ze/zir, per/pers, ey/em, xe/xem, may also be preferred. For guidance on their proper usage, check with the person who goes by those pronouns and/or consult resources online.

In most cases, their first person pronouns when referring to themselves (I/me) and their second person pronouns when people refer to them directly (you/your) remain the same.

When you are unsure what a person’s preferred set of personal pronouns is, it is generally acceptable to use “they/them” until they have shared that information with you. You can also structure your language to avoid pronouns altogether.

## Additional resources

There are multiple online resources regarding pronouns and gender. Here are a few you may find helpful:

<https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sgmro/gender-pronouns-resource>

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/internal/policies/gender-identity>