

### **What are personal pronouns?**

Personal pronouns are words that express the gender of others. Statements like “**She** gave a talk about **her** research” or “**He** is standing by **his** poster” affirm the gender of the person in question.

### **Advantages to displaying pronouns?**

We seek an inclusive environment that supports all participants. If you are comfortable doing so, displaying your pronouns prompts others to express and affirm your gender, and promotes inclusivity. It is also a way to show solidarity with people who may feel unsafe and/or anxious about using their pronouns.

### **What if I am uncomfortable displaying my pronouns?**

Displaying your pronouns is a personal choice and entirely optional. There are many reasons a person may not be comfortable displaying their pronouns, please do not make assumptions. If you are uncomfortable with pronouns/displaying your pronouns, you may consider adding a label “No pronouns” to your badge to indicate that you would prefer to be addressed by name.

### **Do pronouns match sex?**

A person’s gender (identity, experiences, social and cultural roles) does not necessarily match their sex (genes, anatomy, hormones). Therefore, a person’s pronouns can be independent of their sex and their sexual orientation.

### **What are neutral pronouns?**

Neutral pronouns (e.g. they/them) can express the gender of non-binary people. Neutral pronouns are diverse because the non-binary identities they express are also diverse, such as neo-pronouns (e.g. fae/faer, xe/xem, ze/zir) which have been adopted by different groups of non-binary people.

### **When were neutral pronouns first used?**

Neutral pronouns have been used in the English language for hundreds of years. For example, “**thon**” derived from “that one” has been used since 1858. Many languages (especially non-European languages) have always used neutral pronouns when referring to people.

### **What does non-binary mean?**

Non-binary is an umbrella term referring to people whose gender does not fit inside the gender binary. This is the assumption that all people are categorized into two distinct, exclusive and opposing genders (feminine/women vs. masculine/men). There are diverse forms of non-binary gender. Including - but not limited to - people who have no gender, people who are both feminine and masculine, people who are neither feminine nor masculine, people who change gender, and people who have multiple genders.

### **Do pronouns change?**

Yes. For example, gender fluid/flux people might change pronouns based on their current gender state.

### **What if I make a mistake?**

Everybody makes mistakes! If you accidentally use wrong pronouns, simply apologize and/or correct yourself. This shows you respect that person and their pronouns.

If you hear somebody using wrong pronouns when talking about another person, you can politely reaffirm the misgendered person’s pronouns during conversation. This is often a much-appreciated act of allyship.

### **What if I am unsure of which pronouns to use?**

Ask politely and respectfully. A simple “May I ask for your pronouns?” could be an ideal ice-breaker for leading onto further conversation. Another easy way is to introduce yourself with your name and pronouns, thus implicitly inviting the other person to present their pronouns. If someone declines to share their pronouns, understand that there are many reasons a person could choose to withhold that information, and try to prioritize referring to that person by name if possible. While CCS encourages its members to share their pronouns, everyone should be able to do so on their own terms.