

Let's talk about

Pronouns

What are Pronouns?

Pronoun: any of a small set of words in a language that are used as substitutes for nouns or noun phrases and whose referents are named or understood in the context - *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

Why are Pronouns important?

As the definition demonstrates, pronouns provide understanding and context when speaking to others. Many also see pronouns as a label, and to use the correct pronouns when addressing someone shows respect. Neglecting to use someone's preferred pronouns can make that person feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, and alienated.

How do I use pronouns inclusively?

Pronouns often carry a categorization of gender. You might have heard these referred to as "masculine" and "feminine" pronouns such as: **she/her/hers & he/him/his.**

Many people do not identify as strictly masculine or feminine and it is best not to assume that you know someone's gender identity. Thus we need gender-inclusive pronouns such as: **they/them/their.**

SUB.	OBJ.	POS.
she	her	hers
he	him	his
they	them	their

WAIT! There's more!

In addition to they/them/their, there are many other gender-inclusive pronouns out there! Here are a few that you might hear...

zie	zir	zirs
sie	hir	hirs
ey	em	eirs

Tips!

- ★ Introduce your pronouns first when meeting someone for the first time. **Putting yourself out there will allow others to feel comfortable to do the same.**
- ★ Do not assume you know someone's gender identity and pronouns if you have never met them - use they/them/their or preferred name until you have gained their rapport and preferred pronouns are given to you. **Remember it is a privilege to not have to worry about what pronouns someone will use for you and not everyone shares that privilege.**
- ★ You might be asking yourself "What if I make a mistake?" We all slip up sometimes. The best thing to do if you use the incorrect pronouns is to apologize and use the correct pronouns moving forward. **Try not to make a big deal or bring extra attention to the situation.**
- ★ Attend an Inclusive Language Workshop to learn more about the importance of inclusive language and the intersections and impacts of words across various identities within the NAU community. **Register through LOUIE > Self Service > Learning and Development.**

