

Getting “them” right: Pronouns and why they matter on MED Campus

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She/her/hers

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March 25, 2019

Objectives

- Why pronouns matter
- Why now
- What you need to know
- What you can do

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Video - Why pronouns matter (2:29 min)

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/08/why-pronouns-matter/>


Being misgendered frequently has a measurably negative effect on the health of transgender and non-binary people (McLemore, K.A. 2018).

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Wiki Loves Monuments: The world's largest photography competition is now open! Photograph a historic site, learn more about our history, and win prizes.



Singular *they*

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Singular *they* is the use in English of the pronoun *they* or its **inflected** or derivative forms, *them*, *their*, *theirs*, and *themselves* (or *themselves*), as an **epicene** (gender-neutral) singular pronoun. It typically occurs with an **antecedent** of indeterminate gender, as in sentences such as:

- "*Somebody left **their** umbrella in the office. Would **they** please collect it?*"^[1]
- "*The **patient** should be told at the outset how much **they** will be required to pay.*"^[2]
- "*But a **journalist** should not be forced to reveal **their** sources.*"^[2]

The singular *they* had emerged by the 14th century, about a century after plural *they*. It has been commonly employed in everyday English ever since then, though it has been the target of criticism since the late 19th century. Its use in formal English has become more common with the trend toward **gender-inclusive language**.

Contents [hide]

- Inflected forms and derivative pronouns
 - Regional preferences
- Usage
 - Older usage
 - Prescription of generic *he*
 - Contemporary use of *he* to refer to a generic or indefinite antecedent
 - Trend to gender-neutral language
 - Contemporary usage
- Acceptability and prescriptive guidance
 - Usage guidance in American style guides
 - Usage guidance in British style guides

“The singular *they* had emerged by the 14th century, about a century after the plural *they*....Its use in formal English has become more common with the trend toward gender-inclusive language.”



Merriam-Webster Breaks Down Use Of Singular 'Their' In Quirky Limerick

1.1k



The dictionary publisher broke down the term as one of its quirky “usage limericks” this week. The site’s editors have been producing the popular poems, intended to help writers avoid language and grammatical errors, for some time.

The use of the singular “their,” Merriam-Webster noted on Twitter Wednesday, seems like a grammatical error, but is in fact appropriate.



Merriam-Webster 
@MerriamWebster



If you're a stickler for grammar, prepare
to be irked by the singular 'their'
Tho it seems a mistake
The position we take
Is if the word is in use we don't care [merriam-
webster.com/words-at-play/...](https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/)

♡ 2,403 1:09 PM - Jan 31, 2018



Oxford English Dictionary: Singular "they" is totally OK

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Posted on 10/01/2018 at 10:45 AM by [Sadye Scott-Hainchek](#)

It may be blasphemy to many ears, but the Oxford English Dictionary editors aren't afraid to say it: "They" as a singular pronoun is established, correct usage.

The construction first appears in writing in the 1375 medieval romance *William and the Werewolf*, meaning that it was almost certainly used in spoken language even earlier.

Still struggling to stomach this news? Think about how we've accepted singular "you," which as previously been plural only, and that might calm you somewhat.

Learn more about the history of "they" [on the OED blog](#).

Categories: [Behind the scenes](#)

Tagged As: [Language](#), [Writing advice](#)

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[Professor Yvette Cozier](#) serves as Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion.

Below are a variety of resources and initiatives to foster diversity and inclusion at SPH:

+ [SPH Diversity & Inclusion Oath](#)

OPEN

+ [SPH Reads](#)

OPEN

+ [Diversity and Inclusion Seminar Series](#)

OPEN

+ [Racial Justice Talking Circle](#)

OPEN

+ [Student Organizations](#)

OPEN

Students

[Student Dashboard](#)

[Incoming Students](#)

[Registrar's Office](#)

Graduate Student Life

[Student Awards and Honors](#)

[Student Life Calendar](#)

[Student Signature Events](#)

[Student Organizations](#)

[Student Resources](#)

[Health & Wellness](#)

Diversity & Inclusion

We, the Boston University School of Public Health community, believe that fostering diversity and inclusion is essential to fulfilling [our mission](#) as an academic public health institution; a mission firmly rooted in social justice. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion strengthens our voice as a community while elevating our ability to eliminate health disparities locally, nationally, and globally. We maintain and celebrate this commitment through excellence and innovation in research, education, and service. You may view your [Diversity & Inclusion Road Map](#) to learn more about what we are doing here to foster this initiative.

Diversity and inclusion are fundamental to a rewarding educational experience; our community benefits from the School's robust, complex mix of backgrounds and

“We, as students of Boston University School of Public Health, form a community with a robust, complex mix of backgrounds and perspectives.

We enter this community with a shared mission: to improve the health of local, national, and international populations, particularly the disadvantaged, underserved, and vulnerable. In this endeavor, we recognize that social justice is integral to our shared vision of a healthier world.

As a student and a member of the BUSPH community, I vow to live by this oath.

I will challenge my worldview through interactions inside and outside the classroom.

I will embrace each person recognizing their inherent dignity and acknowledge the diversity of their identities and lived experiences.

I will create an inclusive community for all by challenging biases and acknowledging privilege.

I will act as an agent of social change in the School, community, field of public health, and beyond.

This is the public health legacy I am creating.

This is the BU School of Public Health I believe in.

This is our promise to ourselves and our world.”



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Celebrating our Diverse and Dynamic Community



Leadership



[Maria Isabel Dominguez, PhD](#)

Assistant Professor, Medical Sciences
Assistant Dean of Diversity & Multicultu



[Fadie Thomas Coleman, MA, PhD](#)

Assistant Professor, Medical Sciences & Education
Director, Biomedical Laboratory and Clinical Science
(BLCS) Program



Farrah Belizaire, MS
Manager of Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion →

[Leadership](#)

[Post-baccalaureate, Undergraduate,
Summer and Youth Programs](#)

[Minority and International Scientists
Organization \(MISO\)](#)

[Upcoming GMS Diversity, Equity &
Inclusion Events](#)



STRATEGIC PLAN

Frontline Medicine:
2020 Vision and Beyond



School of Medicine

Reaffirm our commitment to diversity among our faculty and learners to better serve our patients and facilitate discovery. We will become the institution of choice for outstanding faculty, students and staff by nurturing their careers and with a reputation for diversity and inclusion.

The AAMC published an updated strategic planning guide to assist medical schools in enhancing diversity and inclusion in academic medicine in 2016. We have adopted the recommendations found in this document, including:

- Soliciting commitment from key stakeholders
- Building a strong foundation by assessing the existing landscape
- Identifying leverage points and challenges
- Setting diversity goals that align with organization mission, vision and values
- Setting clear and realistic objectives, tasks and steps required to achieve goals
- Developing metrics to measure achievement of each objective
- Establishing roles, responsibilities and decision-making channels
- Developing a realistic timeline for executing all action steps.

The 2016 BU Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion has reinforced our commitment by recommending the

5 10



Sandro Galea @sandrogalea · 22h

Trump Administration approach "quite simply negates the humanity of people."
@HHSGov should have no part in this. Neither should anyone who cares about
our shared humanity. @NYTimes



'Transgender' Could Be Defined Out of Existence Under Trump Admi...

The Trump administration is considering a legal definition of gender as
immutable and fixed at birth, the most drastic in a series of moves against t...
nytimes.com

20 22



Sandro Galea @sandrogalea · Oct 20

**'Transgender' could be defined out
of existence under the Trump
administration**
-NYT October 21, 2018

Supreme Court allows Trump administration to enforce transgender military ban

The military can enforce its restrictions on transgender troops while challenges to the policy play out in the lower courts.

Supreme Court allows Trump's transgender military ban to take effect

JAN. 22, 2019 / 01:10



Trump Administration is enforcing
the transgender military ban
- NBC News January 22, 2019

United Airlines Becomes First U.S. Airline to Offer Non-binary Gender Options



Frida Garza

Friday 2:01pm • Filed to: UNITED AIRLINES ▾

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UNITED 



Welcome Aboard, Mx.: United Airlines Continues to Lead in Inclusivity by Offering Non-Binary Gender Booking Options

March 22, 2019

CHICAGO, March 22, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- United Airlines today announced it has become the first U.S. airline to offer non-binary gender options throughout all booking channels in addition to providing the option to select the title "Mx." during booking and in a MileagePlus customer profile. Customers now have the ability to identify themselves as M(male), F(female), U(undisclosed) or X(unspecified), corresponding with what is indicated on their passports or identification.

"United is determined to lead the industry in LGBT inclusivity, and we are so proud to be the first U.S. airline to offer these inclusive booking options for our customers," said United's Chief Customer Officer Toby Enqvist. "United is excited to share with our



Massachusetts
Department of
Public Health



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LGBTQQIA+ Definitions



Definitions

Sexual orientation

An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Some examples include heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, asexual and more.

VS.

Gender identity

One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. Some examples include transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, cisgender

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Definitions

Cisgender: A term for people whose gender corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth. This is the dominant group in our culture. Cisgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, asexual, etc...

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Some examples include, non-binary, genderqueer, MTF, FTM. This is the non-dominant culture. NOTE: Similar to cisgender people, being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, asexual, etc.

Definitions

Gender expression: External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Why language is mandatory

- For some people, names, nicknames, and pronouns do not seem like a big deal. This is an example of privilege around gender identity
- For other people such as many trans and non-binary folks, names are very important. They are something that many genderqueer folks spend time thinking about and navigating everyday – whether they want to or not.

Why language is mandatory

- Name and pronouns are not a preference, they are our identity. When you do not use a person's correct pronouns and name, you are misgendering them
- Being misgendered frequently actually has a measurably negative effect on the health of transgender and non-binary people (McLemore, K. A. 2018).

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The Performance of Transgender Inclusion

The pronoun go-round and the new gender binary

Jen Manion — November 27, 2018

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By nito | Shutterstock

“There are numerous things to be discovered by finding out someone’s pronoun. At its most utilitarian, it is a literal question: tell me what pronoun to call you when I speak of you in the third person. Two intertwined forces inspire this question. Viewed pessimistically, the question seems to ask, how do I not offend you? Viewed optimistically, it asks instead, how do I refer to you respectfully?”

- Jen Manion, PhD, Associate Professor of History, Amherst College

Possible Practices

- Introduce yourself with your name and pronouns to every new person you meet
- “My name is Julia and my pronouns are she/her/hers.”
- Some people say “my preferred pronouns are” and the trans community has noted that this is misleading because it’s not about *preference*, it’s just truth. So it’s best to just say “my pronouns are...”


Possible Practices

- Ask someone you are meeting for the first time their name and pronouns
- If you are in a group meeting and folks go around introducing themselves, include your pronouns, even if it wasn't asked of you. Model the way.
- Add your pronouns to your email signature
Pronouns: She/her/hers

Subject

RE: Space moves

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t: 617.358.1840
f: 617.638.5299
sgalea@bu.edu
twitter/@sandrogalea
pronouns: he/him/his



THINK. TEACH. DO.
FOR THE HEALTH OF ALL.

Possible Practices

In the classroom:

- Share your pronouns with the class on the first day; put them on your intro slide
- Add your pronouns to your syllabus; include a sentence asking students to email you if they have a preferred name and their pronouns so you get them right. Then, *get them right*.
- In class encourage students to share their pronouns with you and put them in their email signatures so everyone knows them

Did you know?

- Gendered honorifics are problematic in the classroom – Mr. or Ms. ... Mx.
- “Ladies and gentlemen” does not encompass everyone in the room
- “Guys” does not include everyone
- Use words such as “folks” or “y’all”

Possible Practices

Recommendation letters:

- If you don't know a student's pronouns, ask. Or just use their name over and over
- If you don't know how a student identifies, don't use he/she when writing a letter on their behalf
- If they use "they/them" or a non traditional pronoun, ask them if they would like you to state that in the letter; this is a great way to introduce them to a future school and avoid possible confusion

What to do when you mess up

- When you make a mistake with someone's name or pronouns and realize you are making it mid-conversation or mid-sentence, correct yourself and begin using their correct name and pronouns.
- For example, "I was going to the store with her – I mean – them." You can add the word "sorry," but do not apologize profusely.

What to do if you are corrected...

...by a trans person:

- All you need to say is, “Thank you for correcting me. I will do better.” and then make a conscious and good-faith effort to do better. Do not apologize profusely, make an excuse, or say anything else.
- The best thing you can do is not extend the conversation and simply make a change.

What to do if you are corrected...

...by someone else:

- Listen and take note of the change you need to make. Acknowledge that you got it.
- Do not feel the need to go to the trans person and apologize – especially publicly or profusely.
- Apologizing can actually have a negative effect because it extends the conversation and reminds the trans person about being misgendered, which is essentially misgendering them again.

Gender Neutral Restrooms

The following is a list of locations for gender neutral individual restrooms on the Medical Campus.

Floor	Building
A-Bldg – School of Medicine Annex	
2	202, 214
3	300A, 300B
4	404, 405
5	509
B-Bldg – Robinson Building	
2	219
4	403, 405
C-Bldg – Colomore Building	
3	328
4	428
E-Bldg – Evans Building	
1	119
7	726, 730, 731
8	824, two in waiting room lobby, and one in each of the exam rooms
L-Bldg – Instructional Building	
9	910
Talbot Building	
1	107, 108, 125, 126
2	214, 216, 236, 237, 252, 254
3	312, 314, 334, 335, 351, 353
4	408, 410, 445, 447

Calendar

25

MAR

Biochemistry Seminar Series: Cynthia Wolberger, Ph.D. - Title : Histone H2B ubiquitination in transcription and chromatin dynamics."

26

MAR

CReMinar

26

MAR

Prevention Lecture: Occupational Health



**BUMC IS
SMOKE-FREE**
inside and out

QUESTIONS?

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to Theresa Theresa A. Davies, GMS Assistant Dean, Graduate Affairs who invited me and worked with me to make this talk relevant to this group
- Special thanks to Dielle Lundberg, who has shared pieces of their journey with me and I am a better human because of it
- BUSPH Queer Alliance members
- Human Rights Campaign
- [Mypronouns.org](https://mypronouns.org)

Resources

- Julia Lanham jlanham@bu.edu
- BUMC Pride
<https://www.bumc.bu.edu/busm/student-life/student-life/student-life-advocacy-groups/bumc-pride/>
- BU Center for Gender, Sexuality and Activism (CGSA) <https://bucgsa.weebly.com/>
- Name Changes at BU
<http://www.bu.edu/reg/students/name-changes/>
- GLAAD's Tips for Allies
<http://www.glaad.org/transgender/allies>