



Level: Intermediate  
[www.hottakeenglish.com](http://www.hottakeenglish.com)

## “What are your Pronouns?”

1) Discuss these questions with a partner.

- Do you think language can be sexist/cissexist\*? In what way?
- Do you think your native language is more or less sexist/cissexist than English?
- Has someone ever asked you “what are your pronouns?”?
- If someone asks “what are your pronouns?”, what are some of the possible answers?

2) Fill in the table below.

Note: This lesson will focus on the rows that are highlighted in blue.

	Subject pronouns	Object pronouns	Possessive adjectives	Possessive pronouns	Reflexive/intensive pronouns
1 <sup>st</sup> person singular	I	_____	_____	mine	_____
2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular	you	_____	your	_____	yourself
3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular (male)	_____	him	_____	his	_____
3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular (female)	she	_____	_____	_____	herself
3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular (impersonal)	_____	it	its	(not used)	_____
1 <sup>st</sup> person plural	we	_____	_____	ours	ourselves
2 <sup>nd</sup> person plural	you	_____	_____	yours	_____
3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural <b>and</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular gender neutral	they	_____	their	_____	_____

\* cissexist = showing discrimination against trans\* people

3) *You are going to read an article about personal pronouns. Before you start, match the words on the left with their definitions on the right.*

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. refer to us                 | a) determines/decides/illustrates  |
| 2. imply                       | b) accept something as true without question or proof                                    |
| 3. gender nonconforming people | c) speak about us briefly  |
| 4. against their will          | d) express indirectly/suggest  |
| 5. accurate                    | e) a space which includes everyone   |
| 6. nonbinary people            | f) people who have a gender expression that does not conform to traditional gender norms |
| 7. make assumptions            | g) by force  |
| 8. inclusive environment       | i) people who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female                      |
| 9. defines                     | h) correct/true  |

*Now read the text.*

### **What are personal pronouns and why do they matter?**

In English, people frequently refer to us using pronouns when they speak about us. Often, when speaking about a singular human in the third person, we highlight someone's gender – i.e. "he/him" to talk about a man/boy or "she/her" to talk about a woman/girl. But only using "she/her" or "he/him" pronouns is not always accurate or helpful.

Often, people make assumptions about the gender of another person based on the way someone looks or based on their name. These assumptions aren't always correct, and the act of making an assumption (even if correct) sends a potentially harmful message – that the way someone looks defines what their gender is.

Using someone's correct personal pronouns is a way to respect them and create an inclusive environment; just as using a person's name can be a way to respect them. Just as it can be offensive to make up a nickname for someone and call them that nickname against their will, it can be offensive to guess someone's pronouns and refer to them using pronouns that the person does not want to use. Actively choosing to ignore the pronouns someone has stated that they use could imply that you believe that intersex, transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people do not or should not exist.

A great way to create and normalise space for people to share their pronouns is first to share your own. You can do this by saying, for example, "Hi, my name is Farida and I go by the pronouns 'she/her'" or "I'm Yoshi and I use 'he/him' pronouns."

“They/them” pronouns can be used in English if you do not know which pronouns a person uses. Additionally, “they/them” pronouns are regularly used by (often non-binary) people who do not consider themselves “male” or “female” and therefore do not want to use “she/her” or “he/him” pronouns. Some people might request that others do not use any pronouns to refer to them at all, instead asking that people use their names.

Adapted from MyPronouns.org: <https://www.mypronouns.org>

4) Read the article again. Are these statements **true** or **false**, or are they **not mentioned** in the text?

- a) It is not correct to exclusively use “she/her” or “he/him” pronouns.
- b) Getting someone’s pronouns wrong is really embarrassing.
- c) If you make guesses about what someone’s pronouns are, you give the impression that you think the way someone looks defines their gender.
- d) Calling someone by their nickname is offensive and sends a harmful message.
- e) It’s best to outright ask people what their pronouns are, in order to create an inclusive environment.
- f) “They/them” pronouns can be used to talk about a group of people, as well as about someone in the third person.
- g) Using “they/them” pronouns in official documentation can lead to confusion.

5) Read the introductions of the people below and then fill in the correct pronouns in sentences a-h. The missing words could be subject pronouns, object pronouns, possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns or reflexive/intensive pronouns (see table on page 1).

Hi I’m Marie. I  
use she/her  
pronouns

Hi I’m Charlie. I  
use they/them  
pronouns

Hi I’m Coco.  
Please just use  
my name

Hi I’m Max. I  
use he/him  
pronouns

- a) Have you met Marie yet? \_\_\_\_\_ has just been hired as the new diversity officer. I read \_\_\_\_\_ resume; it’s pretty impressive.
- b) Coco has new music coming out next week and I can’t wait to hear it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ hasn’t released anything for ages. I absolutely love  
\_\_\_\_\_ style.
- c) Max already told me that \_\_\_\_\_ wouldn’t be attending the meeting on the weekend. \_\_\_\_\_ is really bogged down with work at the moment, plus \_\_\_\_\_ mother is sick and  
\_\_\_\_\_ has to take care of her.
- d) Charlie is a writer and wrote that book \_\_\_\_\_. All the ideas  
\_\_\_\_\_ come up with are \_\_\_\_\_ own.

- e) Max saw \_\_\_\_\_ in the mirror.
- f) That jacket belongs to Charlie. Don't you believe me? I can assure you it is \_\_\_\_\_.
- g) Max and Marie talk about \_\_\_\_\_ all the time.
- h) Have you seen Charlie anywhere? When you see \_\_\_\_\_ can you give \_\_\_\_\_ this?

Answers:

2)

	<i>Subject pronouns</i>	<i>Object pronouns</i>	<i>Possessive adjectives</i>	<i>Possessive pronouns</i>	<i>Reflexive/intensive pronouns</i>
<i>1<sup>st</sup> person singular</i>	I	me	my	mine	myself
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> person singular</i>	you	you	your	yours	yourself
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (male)</i>	he	him	his	his	himself
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (female)</i>	she	her	her	hers	herself
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (impersonal)</i>	it	it	its	(not used)	itself
<i>1<sup>st</sup> person plural</i>	we	us	our	ours	ourselves
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> person plural</i>	you	you	your	yours	yourselves
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> person plural and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular gender neutral</i>	they	them	their	theirs	themselves

3) 1. c), 2. d), 3. f), 4. g), 5. i), 6. h), 7. b), 8. e), 9. a)

4) a. True, b. Not mentioned, c. True, d. False, e. False, f. True, g. Not mentioned

5)

- Have you met Marie yet? She has just been hired as the new diversity officer. I read her resume; it's pretty impressive.
- Coco has new music coming out next week and I can't wait to hear it. Coco hasn't released anything for ages. I absolutely love Coco's style.
- Max already told me that he wouldn't be attending the meeting on the weekend. He is really bogged down with work at the moment, plus his mother is sick and he has to take care of her.
- Charlie is a writer and wrote that book themselves (or themselves, both are acceptable). All the ideas they come up with are their own.
- Max saw himself in the mirror.
- That jacket belongs to Charlie. Don't you believe me? I can assure you it is theirs.
- Max and Marie talk about themselves all the time.
- Have you seen Charlie anywhere? When you see them can you give them this?