



# Language Toolkit

2021

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## INTRODUCTION

Hello! Thank you for checking out the Language Toolkit brought to you by Side by Side. We are excited to share this resource with school staff, parents, family, community partners, and anyone else who has an LGBTQ-identified youth in their life. The purpose of this toolkit is to answer some common questions we receive around gender neutral language, pronouns, tips and tricks, and being inclusive in Spanish.

Although we have tried to bring you a number of resources in this document, this is a leaping off point and we hope you continue to explore different platforms, resources, and engage in conversations to continue to learn and grow. Language is always evolving and changing and we need to find ways to grow right along with it.

As always, if there is a question, comment, or concern please do not hesitate to reach out to the staff at Side by Side as we are always trying to support the greater Virginia community to help LGBTQ-identified youth thrive in their lives.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Take care,

**Side by Side Staff 2021**

## **SIDE BY SIDE**

### **What is Side by Side?**

Side by Side is a non-profit organization located in Richmond, Virginia. We serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth in the Greater Richmond area, as well as the state of Virginia. Side by Side provides a housing program for LGBTQ-identified youth between the ages of 18 to 25, as well as support groups throughout each week for youth who are 11 to 20 years old.

Side by Side provides countless other services such as meals, clothing, and training, which can be offered to schools, organizations, companies, etc. The content below will focus on the school program at Side by Side, which is growing rapidly. The school program is made up of passionate school staff in both private and public, middle and high schools who want to be advocates for LGBTQ youth.

### **Side by Side School Programs**

Outside of our weekly support groups, we have a growing school program that offers a wide variety of support, education, resources, and relationship building. Our school programs center on three areas:

1. Training - we offer training to all levels of school communities to ensure everyone knows best practices and lived experiences
2. School Staff Advocacy - we have a passionate school staff advocacy program where advocates from across Virginia join together in community to gain ongoing training experiences, resources, and support from Side by Side staff
3. GSA - we assist in creating and supporting student lead GSA (Gay Straight Alliances) to help create safer school environments for LGBTQ-identified youth and allies

We work tirelessly to help educators and school staff feel supported, trained, and empowered to be agents of change for LGBTQ youth in their school communities - let's connect!

### **List of Free Side by Side Services**

- Weekly support groups for LGBTQ or questioning youth and young adults 11 to 20 years old
- Community events like GSA Summit or Alternative Prom
- Free binders for youth across the state
- Partnerships with Diversity Thrift and Nationz to provide free clothing and food
- Crisis support and connections to mental health support
- Much more!

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1. What are pronouns

- Pronouns are words that substitute a noun
- *For example: "Tucker chases the ball and he brought it back."*
  - The pronoun "he" is replacing the subject "Tucker".

## 2. Is it grammatically correct to use pronouns like they/them singularly?

- Yes! The APA recently determined the pronouns they and them can be used to refer to a singular person.
- *For example: "Shane drove to the store and they bought milk."*
  - The pronoun "they" is being used to replace the subject "Shane".

## 3. Can people have more than one set of pronouns?

- Absolutely! It is common for folks to say they use more than one set of pronouns. All this means is the individual is comfortable with more than one set of pronouns.
- *For example: Shannon uses she/her and they/them pronouns. I can refer to Shannon using either set and I affirm them.*

## 4. I am really intimidated to ask someone their pronouns - what do I do?

- First, it is completely normal to be unsure by this process, especially if it is new. If you feel uncomfortable, consider sharing your own pronouns to start the conversation.
- *For example: "Hi! My name is Max and I use he/him pronouns."*
- This could also be in an email signature, a sign in your office or classroom, or somewhere else where the general public can see.
- By doing this you begin the conversation and continue to find ways to gain comfort with pronouns by practicing with a trusted friend or co-worker or watching others practice.

## 5. I asked someone their pronouns and they got mad - I'm never doing this again!

- We understand... it can be really scary to ask and then upset someone else. If that happens, try to remember we are all on our own journey and do not think everyone will react like this.
- If this happens, explain why you do so (if you feel comfortable) and share that you ask everyone this and you are not singling them out.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - CONT.

### **6. A youth just came out to me and I am struggling with making the pronoun switch in my head.**

- Again, this is very common. We are all learning and many youth will be patient as long as they see you are trying. Find someone to practice with, repeat the pronouns in your head, and create a space and time for you to work on this without the presence of the youth.
- Although many youth are incredibly understanding, it is important for us to show we are trying and actively working to improve so we can affirm the youth.

### **7. I accidentally misgendered a youth - help!**

- Simply apologize, correct, and move on. No need to dwell in the moment and do your best to not repeat the mistake.
- We are all humans so just keep moving forward!

### **8. What are examples of gender neutral language when referring to a group of people?**

- The possibilities are endless!
- Scholars, students, friends, fellow humans - find ways to connect with folks and see ways to engage them without the focus on their gender identity.
- This pattern also works when dividing up groups. For example: if you love Batman go to the right and if you love Superman go to the left. Or readers to the left, artists to the right, and athletes in the back of the room. Again, customize it to the age, group, and have fun with it!

# PRONOUN TIPS & TRICKS

## Pronoun Process

1. Share and ask - share your name and pronouns with peers, students, and family! If you feel comfortable, find ways to ask others' their name and pronouns either in conversation, in an email, a survey, and so on!
2. Safety - if you ask someone their pronouns, be certain to make clear they can share the pronouns they feel comfortable in the space; we don't want to out folks.
3. Affirm - when someone shares their name and pronouns respect, honor, and use the name and pronouns given.
4. Mistakes - we all make them. If you use the incorrect name and pronouns this is called misgendering; simply apologize, correct, and move on. Don't make a scene!
5. Practice - if you feel you are struggling with pronouns practice by yourself, with a trusted person, or in your head. The more your practice the more natural it will feel.

## Advanced Pronoun Tips

### 1. Do not use past names and pronouns (deadname) when referring to a person in the past.

- a. For example: A youth comes out and says she wants to go by Catherine and use she/her pronouns. You know Catherine as Robert. When referring to Catherine before she came out, such as a childhood story or a past event, you do not say: Robert used to play with me. Instead you would say Catherine used to play with me.
- b. We always want to affirm the current chosen name and pronoun the person is telling us to use.

### 2. Step away from centering "preference".

- a. Historically, we say: John's preferred pronouns are he and him.
- b. However, language like this can feel that the magnitude of someone's name and pronouns are missed. For many youth, the name and pronouns they share are chosen carefully to try and represent how they feel in their heart, mind, and soul. It is not a preference but a need that their chosen name and pronouns be respected so they can be fully present in the moment.

### 3. Start making immediate changes.

- a. Youth pick up on the small things and they make note of how comfortable someone is around pronouns and if that individual is putting in the work to make changes.
- b. For example, if Catherine says she wants to use they/them pronouns and dad immediately changes - huge brownie points for dad! Catherine will notice and it tells them that dad is rocking out the pronouns!

## GENERAL LANGUAGE TIPS

### **\*\*\*CW: harmful language \*\*\* Language/Phrases to Avoid**

- Transexual or transvestite
- Transgendered
- Homosexual
- She-man
- Tranny
- It
- "Are you a homosexual/transgender(ed)?"
- "Have you had the surgery?" or "Have you had a sex change operation?"
- "You don't look trans."
- "Are you pre or post op?"
- "What is your real name?"
- "Are you queer?"
- Choice or preference in relation to someone's gender identity or sexual orientation
- Preferred pronouns

### **Don't Ask Intrusive Questions of Them or Their Loved Ones**

- About their bodies or medical history
- About their deadname
- About their sexual orientation or identity

### **Avoid Assumptions & Microaggressions**

- Not every trans or non-binary person has the same journey
- Avoid making back-handed compliments
- Be cautious with disclosure and confidentiality



## GENERAL LANGUAGE TIPS - CONT.

Instead of...	Try using...
Men or Women	Everyone or Folks
Mankind	People
Congressman	Members of Congress
Brothers and Sisters	Siblings
His or Hers	Theirs
Girlfriend/Boyfriend or Husband/Wife	Partner or Significant Other

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### Language to Use

- Person centered - "Tommy is a trans-guy."
- Trans-guy, man, boy, or masc
- Trans-girl, woman, girl, or femme
- Transgender or trans
- Cisgender
- Chosen name or "What is your name"
- Deadname
- Gay or lesbian - replacing homosexual
- Queer - if a person uses this to self-identify

### Be Gender Neutral

- Students
- Scholars
- Y'all
- Humans
- Lovelies
- Friends
- Everyone
- Siblings
- Kids
- Partner(s)
- The list is endless!

# PRONOUN CHARTS

## General Pronouns

SUBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVE	POSSESSIVE	REFLEXIVE	EXAMPLE
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him.
They	Them	Their	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to zim.

**\*Pronounced zee/zer/zers and zee/zem/zeir (rhymes with hair) -- do your best to sound it out.\***

## Language Tips

INSTEAD OF THIS...	TRY THIS...
Husband/Wife	Partner/Spouse/Significant Other
Ladies & Gentleman	Team/Guests/Y'all
Homosexuals	Gay/Lesbian/Queer
Transgendered	Transgender
Transgenders	Transgender People
Sir/Ma'am	Zir
Ms./Mr.	Mx.

## PRONOUN CHARTS - CONT.

### Neopronouns

Pronouns created outside of the traditional gender binary (she/her or he/him) that help folks feel more at home. Traditionally, they/them has been used but more and more folks are evolving this!

Some examples of Neopronouns:

- xe/xem/xyrs
- ey/em/eirs
- ze/zir/zirs
- fae/faer/faers
- per/per/pers
- e/em/ems
- ze/hir/hirs
- hir/hir/hirs
- ve/vir/vis
- ne/nem/nir

Although neopronouns might seem strange or different, remember language always changes. We do not need to fully understand someone's lived experience to honor their humanness.



Check out [Bustle](https://www.bustle.com/wellness/how-to-use-neopronouns-expert) or helpful tips on neopronouns!

(<https://www.bustle.com/wellness/how-to-use-neopronouns-expert>)

Check out this [Rolling Stone](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/08/style/neopronouns-nonbinary-explainer.html) article and remember: practice, practice, practice!

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/08/style/neopronouns-nonbinary-explainer.html>)

# PRONOUNS IN SPANISH/ PRONOMBRES EN ESPAÑOL

## General Pronouns / Pronombres Generales

TERCERA PERSONA		ARTÍCULOS	PRIMERA + SEGUNDA PERSONA	
SINGULAR	PLURAL		PLURAL	
Él	Ellos		Le  La  Les	Nosotros
Ella	Ellas	Nosotras		Vosotras
Elle	Elles	Nosotres		Vosotres

### Tips

- Avoid the generic masculine, instead use "-e":
  - -o, -a, -e
  - Todos, Todas, Todes
- Latinx and Latin@ are sometimes used as a gender neutral version of Latino/Latina. However, the pronunciation is not intuitive when speaking spanish.
- Latine is a more recent alternative that is much more intuitive to pronounce in spanish.

### Consejos

- Evita el masculino genérico, en vez puedes usar "-e":
  - -o, -a, -e
  - Todos, Todas, Todes
- Latinx y Latin@ a veces se usan como una versión neutral de género en vez de Latino/Latina. Sin embargo, la pronunciación no es intuitiva cuando se habla español.
- Latine es una alternativa más reciente que es mucho más intuitiva de pronunciar en español.

## TAKE THE GENDER OUT OF LANGUAGE

We use gendered language in our everyday vocabulary and for special events! Momentous events like prom, homecoming, and graduation are incredible times in a youth's life - let's make it so all youth, all students feel welcome and comfortable.

- Prom, homecoming, other dances
- Do not cancel them - just tweak them!
- Replace king and queen
- Try Royal Court - students nominate a few students to represent them
  - Could be broken down by levels of a royal court (monarchs, heirs, nobles, or princesses)

Again, the purpose is to explore, play, and make it more inclusive. By using systems like this, more students can be involved!

### Graduation

- Refer to students as scholars instead of ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls
- Allow students to pick their graduation gown colors

### Dividing Classes

- Instead of boys and girls try dividing folks by
  - Favorite superhero: Superman on the right, Batman on the left
  - Colors: Purple on this side, yellow in the back, pink up front
  - Height, birthday month, oldest, youngest
  - Zodiac signs
  - Favorite animals, show, movies, music
  - Alphabet
  - Break up by identities: gamer, athlete, scholar, introvert, extrovert, and so on....
  - The possibilities are endless!
- Play with the endless ways to get to know folks outside of their gender identity

## RESOURCES

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If viewing this resource page in hard-copy version, you may contact us at [info@sidebysideva.org](mailto:info@sidebysideva.org) for a digital copy with clickable links

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- [GLAAD's Ally Terminology](#)
- [Mypronouns.org for helpful videos on inclusive language and practice](#)
- [Safe Zone's Language Dos and Don'ts](#)
- [TSER Infographics around language](#)
- [Gender Spectrum's Definitions](#)
- [Gender Spectrum's Understanding Gender](#)
- [The Trevor Project's Allyship Guide](#)
- [It Gets Better Language Resource \(with videos\)](#)
- [LGBTQ Life Center Language Tips](#)
- [Diversity Center Language Tips](#)
- [My Workplace Health terms and links to pronoun use](#)
- [No Safe Place terminology](#)
- [GLAAD and MAPS guide of language to use and to avoid](#)

### Spanish Resources

- [Storytelling Spanish Resource](#)
- [Pride in Spanish Class](#)
- [Nonbinary Spanish: How is Latinx pronounced?](#)
- [¿Qué es el lenguaje inclusivo y cómo usarlo? \(Independent en Español\)](#)
- [Common Ground International Language Services: Inclusive Language in Spanish](#)