First names and pronouns

When might an individual wish to use a different first name and/or pronoun?

An individual may wish to use a different first name and pronoun for many reasons. There are times when a nickname or middle name may be used as a first name rather than a legal first name. There are also occasions in which an individual may wish to use a first name due to gender identity or gender expression.

Pronouns are often a representation of an individual's gender identity or wish to express a neutral gender identity.

What are gender-neutral pronouns?

Gender-neutral pronouns are pronouns that do not associate a gender with an individual.

Why might an individual wish to use a gender-neutral pronoun?

Some languages, such as English, have no truly gender-neutral third person pronoun available or commonly used, thus gender-neutral pronouns are created in the interest of greater gender equity. In addition to being able to use them to refer to an individual whose gender is unknown at the moment of conversation, gender-neutral pronouns can be an option for an individual within the transgender, genderqueer, and gender-neutral communities.

Isn't 'it' gender-neutral?

"It" is used to denote objects, and thus is considered offensive in reference to an individual. Some transgender and gender non-conforming individuals report "it" being used in reference to them in demeaning, disgusted, and threatening ways.

What are some examples of gender-neutral pronouns?

The most commonly used gender-neutral pronouns are listed below, along with their pronunciations and the gendered pronouns 'he' and 'she' for easy reference. Members of the KCAI community most often identify as he, she, or they.

Subject	Object	Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
He	Him	His	His	Himself
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themself
Ze /zee/	Hir /here/	Hir /here/	Hirs /heres/	Hirself /herself/
Ey /ee/	Em /em/	Eir /air/	Eirs /airs/	Emself /emself/

Examples of how to use these pronouns:

She went to her bedroom.	I am her sister.	She smiles to herself.
He went to his bedroom.	I am his sister.	He smiles to himself.
Ze went to hir bedroom.	I am hir sister.	Ze smiles to hirself.
They went to their bedroom.	I am their sister.	They smiles to themself.
E went to eir bedroom.	I am eir sister.	E smiles at emself.

Isn't this difficult to adjust to and doesn't this sound awkward?

Integrating a gender-neutral pronoun into an already existing language can prove difficult, but not impossible. It can be achieved through intentional practice, and can really help someone feel included and respected. Also, knowledge about and usage of gender-neutral pronouns are often good ways to communicate allyship to transgender and gender variant individuals.

*Parts of this terminology sheet is adapted from a document created by Eli R. Green (eli@transacademics.org) and Eric N. Peterson at the LGBT