

# HOW TO USE ZOOM PRONOUN BACKGROUNDS

A GUIDE  
CREATING A MORE INCLUSIVE MIT

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A pronoun is a word to use in place of someone's name, i.e. "Fatima baked; **they**\* made cookies"

Pronoun Zoom backgrounds are optional and are for everyone, regardless of gender identity.

## WHY ARE PRONOUNS USEFUL?

Gender is a big part of who we are. Using the wrong pronouns for someone can be really harmful to them.

## WHY ARE ZOOM PRONOUN BACKGROUNDS USEFUL?

We can't always assume someone's gender by looking at them.

## SOMEONE IS USING A PRONOUN BACKGROUND, NOW WHAT?

Please refer to them with the pronouns they've indicated.

## WAIT! WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO USE A BACKGROUND?

That's ok! They're optional for that reason.

\*"THEY" IS USED AS A SINGULAR PRONOUN.  
WANT TO LEARN MORE?

[VISIT IDHR.MIT.EDU/EDUCATION/MATERIALS](https://idhr.mit.edu/education/materials)

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Treat people  
with respect

Use "they/them/theirs"  
when you're unsure

Ask people what  
their pronouns are  
and use them

Use the phrase  
"your pronouns" instead of  
"your preferred pronouns"

Practice using the  
correct pronouns



DON'T force people to  
use Zoom pronoun  
backgrounds

DON'T assume  
someone's pronouns

DON'T disclose  
someone's gender  
identity without their  
consent

DON'T ask people about  
their gender assigned at  
birth

DON'T draw attention  
to an occasional  
pronoun slip-up