

Inclusion Day

# HOWS and WHYS of THEYS

by Sex/Gen



(N.B. the convention is that people say the first two pronouns on the left when informing others of their pronouns (e.g., they/them, he/him, etc.). These two give all the information to know what the last three on the right will be, in cases where the first remains ambivalent (ze, xe, or sie).

This also allows people to name their pronouns as she/he, he/she, or simply as s/he – all of which mean that the person wants to you switch up he and she when referring to them. “Floating pronouns” means the same, and some people ask that they/them is also in the mix with he/him and she/her.

## he – him – his – his – himself

**He** liked what the hairdresser had done for **him**.

**His** hair felt more reflective of a style that was really **his**.

**He** glanced in a window as he passed to get a good look at **himself**.

## she – her – her – hers – herself

**She** liked what the hairdresser had done for **her**.

**Her** hair felt more reflective of a style that was really **hers**.

**She** glanced in a window as she passed to get a good look at **herself**.

## they – them – their – theirs – themselves

**They** liked what the hairdresser had done for **them**.

**Their** hair felt more reflective of a style that was really **Theirs**.

**They** glanced in a window as they passed to get a good look at **themselves**.

## ze (or xe, sie) – hir – hir – hirs – hirself

**Ze** liked what the hairdresser had done for **hir**.

**Hir** hair felt more reflective of a style that was really **hirs**.

**Ze** glanced in a window as ze passed to get a good look at **hirself**.

## ze / xe / sie – zir – zir – zirs – zirself

**Ze** liked what the hairdresser had done for **zir**.

**Zir** hair felt more reflective of a style that was really **zirs**.

**Ze** glanced in a window as ze passed to get a good look at **zirself**.

(N.B. this conjugation follows ze/hir, but replaces h with z)

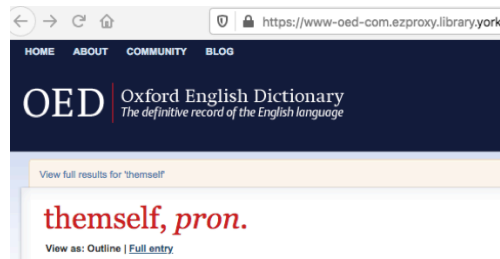
## ze / xe / sie – zem zeir – zeirs – zemself

**Ze** liked what the hairdresser had done for **zem**.

**Zeir** hair felt more reflective of a style that was really **zeirs**.

**Ze** glanced in a window as ze passed to get a good look at **zemself**.

(N.B. this conjugation follows they/them, but replaces th with z)



**2.** In anaphoric reference to a singular pronoun or noun. Cf. **THEY pron. 2**, **THEM pron. 4**.

While *themselves* is now most often found in reference to a singular antecedent, evidence for this use is particularly rare between mid-16th and mid-19th centuries.

**a.** With an antecedent which is grammatically singular, but refers collectively to the members of a group, or has universal reference (e.g. *everyone*, *each person*, *nobody*).

Sometimes, but not always, used to avoid having to specify the gender of the individual(s) being referred to; cf. sense **2b**.

**b.** With a generic or indefinite antecedent referring to an individual (e.g. *a person*, *someone*, *the patient*), used esp. so as to make a general reference to such an individual without specifying gender.

In the 21st century, sometimes used to refer to a named individual, so as to avoid revealing or making an assumption about that person's gender; see e.g. quot. **2009**, and cf. sense **2c**.

**c.** Used to refer to a person whose sense of personal identity does not correspond to conventional sex and gender distinctions, and who has typically asked to be referred to by the pronouns *they*, *them*, etc. Cf. sense **3b**.

**ze, pron.**

View as: Outline | Full entry

Quotations: Show all | Hide all Keywords: On | Off

Text size: A A

**Pronunciation:** Brit. [/zi:/](#), U.S. [/zi/](#)

**Forms:** 19– **sie**, 19– **xe**, 19– **ze**, 19– **zee**, 19– **zhe** Brit. [/ʒi/](#) ... (Show More)

**Frequency (in current use):** ●●●●●●●●

**Origin:** Formed within English, by compounding. **Etymons:** **z-**, **HE pron.**, **SHE pron.**

**Etymology:** < **z-** (chosen as representing a sound not used in other pronouns) + **-e** (in **HE pron.**, ...) (Show More)

**Used as a gender-neutral third person singular subject pronoun. Cf. *s/HE pron.*<sup>2</sup>**

In later contextual use, especially with reference to individuals who do not identify themselves as either male or female, but rather as another or no gender, or as a combination of genders, as distinct from use as a term for unknown individuals of unspecified gender.

Quot. 1864 appears to be an isolated early use.

1864 *Ladies Repository* Sept. 567/2 The suggestion of your correspondent 'Philologus' respecting the poverty of our language in its need of an epicene pronoun, is one that must have occurred to every intelligent person... The only points to be considered are, the selection of a suitable word—and I think that either 've' or 'ze' would equally answer the requirement—and the method of its propagation.

1972 S. POLGAR in *Newslet. Amer. Anthropol. Assoc.* Sept. 18/1 Once we are committed to 'ze' for the subjective, the other forms follow fairly easily.

1985 *Re: Non-sexist Lang. (Hist.)* in *net.nlang* (Usenet newsgroup) 14 June My nomination? Zhe. (The zh is pronounced like the z in azure.) Example: If a person saw an automobile accident, what should zhe do?

1996 L. FEINBERG *Transgender Warriors* Pref. p. x I don't have a personal stake in whether the trans liberation movement results in...gender-neutral pronouns, like the ones, such as **ze** (she/he) and **hir** (her/his), being experimented with in cyberspace.

2016 *Washington Post* (Nexis) 10 Jan. (Outlook section) B3 It seems entirely possible that in my daughter's lifetime, gender-specific pronouns will sound as archaic as 'thee' and 'thou', supplanted by 'ze' or 'zir' or some neologism of the future.

(Hide quotations)