

Pronoun Lowdown

About

Designed by: Halley Farwood (she/her)

Number of Players: Two, suitable for socially distanced play

Time: 15–30 minutes

Materials: 24 tokens (small objects, like buttons or beads), cut-out prompts and info cards, pen, paper

Introduction

Using correct pronouns and names can be challenging, particularly for friends and family of transgender, genderqueer, and non-binary folks, who may use different names and pronouns than their loved ones are used to. Pronoun Lowdown will help you practice using the correct names and pronouns for people in your life. Play this game regularly if you can, and be patient with yourself as you are learning. It's difficult to unlearn old habits, but you are doing important work, and with repetition you will improve.

Preparing to Play

Assemble the materials, print everything, and cut out the prompts and info cards.

Establish the names and pronouns that you are going to practice. If you'd like to, fill out the info cards with the names and pronouns you are practicing.

While both players can focus on the same name or pronoun, it isn't necessary. For example, one player might practice using she/her pronouns for his daughter while the other player practices a friend's new name.

Distribute 12 tokens to each player. Each player's goal is to move all 12 tokens from a pool in front of them to their collection, which can be off to one side.

Randomly select about half the prompts and place them in a pile next to your pool. Give the other half of the prompts to the other player.

Choose a first player. If you are introducing Pronoun Lowdown to another person, go first.

How to Play

First player: draw a prompt and answer it

Draw a prompt from your pile and answer the question on the prompt out loud. As you speak, fill in the [name] spaces with the name of your person and the blank spaces with the correct pronouns.

Second player: watch them like a hawk

Keep track of how many times the first player uses the correct or incorrect name and pronouns for their person. If they use the wrong name or pronoun, say “ding!” or make another interrupting sound so that they get immediate feedback. At the end of the prompt, let the first player know how many times they used names and pronouns correctly and incorrectly.

First player: move your tokens

For each correct name or pronoun use, move **one** token from your pool to your collection. You may earn a maximum of **four** tokens per prompt. For each incorrect use, remove **two** tokens from your collection and put them back into your pool. If you lost more tokens than you earned and all your tokens are still in your pool, there are no changes to your tokens for this round.

Switch roles

When the first player finishes a prompt, the roles are reversed. It’s the second player’s turn to draw and answer a prompt from their pile.

The constant penalty

Any time you say the wrong name or pronoun for your person, place **two** tokens from your collection back into your pool (unless your collection is already empty). This penalty applies from the time the game begins until a winner is declared. While you can only earn tokens while responding to prompts, you can lose tokens at **any** time, including during casual conversation between prompts.

The regular way to win

The first player to move all 12 tokens from their pool to their collection wins. However, both players are entitled to an equal number of turns. So if you went first and you collect your last token after your third turn, your opponent may also take a third turn to try to tie the game. If both players have answered five prompts without either of you collecting all your tokens, the game ends and the player with the most tokens wins.

The secret way to win

Any player who improves their ability to use their person’s name or pronouns has achieved the real objective of this game. In this way, both players will definitely win.

Q&A

Can I always earn tokens by using my person’s name?

Players may earn tokens by using their person’s name only if they are practicing a new name.

Do I earn tokens for using the correct name and pronouns when I read the prompt?

No, tokens are only earned during your response to the prompt, not while reading the prompt.

I want to play Pronoun Lowdown with someone who is learning new pronouns, but I’m not struggling with anyone’s name or pronouns myself. How can I play with them?

Try answering the prompts about the person you’re playing with, but instead of using typical second person pronouns like you/your, use the archaic pronouns thee/thou/thy/thine/thyself.

Friendly Advice

If a person whose name or pronouns you are learning invites you to play this game together, that's great! Go ahead and play. But if they don't invite you, play it with someone different. It's our responsibility to put in the work to learn others' names and pronouns; it's not their responsibility to help us learn.

If one player loses two games in a row or is struggling significantly more, give the struggling player two tokens for their collection when you begin. Increase or reduce this starting advantage by mutual agreement.

Some of these prompts will be challenging to answer. If a prompt doesn't apply to your relationship, or if you don't know the answer, take your best guess as to how your person would answer the question for themselves. Alternately, if both players agree, you can simply skip a prompt.

Challenge Modes

As your practice pays off, you may find this game is too easy for you. Here are some variants you can try to keep the game challenging and continue to build your skill.

Type Challenge

Instead of earning up to four tokens per prompt for any correct uses of a pronoun, you can only earn one token per type of pronoun in your response. Here are the types:

Subjective pronouns perform an action. (he, she, they, zie)

Examples: She went to the store. Zie went to the store.

Objective pronouns receive an action. (him, her, them, zir)

Examples: The milk is for them. The milk is for him.

Possessive pronouns show who owns something. (his, her, their, zir)

Examples: It's their milk. It's zir milk.

Reflexive pronouns refer back to the subject. (himself, herself, themself/themselves, zirself)

Examples: She bought it herself. He bought it himself.

Here is an example of a response that earns four tokens in this variant: “They (subjective) are 5’4”. People notice them (objective) because of their (possessive) bright red hair, which they cut themselves (reflexive).”

Combo Challenge

If players are practicing a new name and new pronouns at the same time, they may choose to add a fifth token for correct name use.

Deadline Challenge

Have each player start the game with 20 tokens in their pool instead of 12. Instead of earning up to 4 tokens per prompt, you may earn any number of tokens per prompt. However, you only have 30 seconds to answer each prompt. The player who is not answering the prompt can keep the time with a stopwatch.

Materials

Optional: Info Cards. Fill out the cards below, cut them out, and place them on the table while you play to help both players remember each person's name and pronouns.

Player's Name:	Pronouns:
<u>Jennifer</u>	<u>she/her</u>
Person's Name	Pronouns:
<u>Antonio</u>	<u>they/them</u>
Rule Reminders:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Earn 1 token per correct pronoun/name use when responding to prompts (max 4 per prompt)- Lose 2 tokens for incorrect pronoun/name use at any time during play	

Player's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Person's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Rule Reminders:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Earn 1 token per correct pronoun/name use when responding to prompts (max 4 per prompt)- Lose 2 tokens for incorrect pronoun/name use at any time during play	

Player's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Person's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Rule Reminders:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Earn 1 token per correct pronoun/name use when responding to prompts (max 4 per prompt)- Lose 2 tokens for incorrect pronoun/name use at any time during play	

Player's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Person's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Rule Reminders:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Earn 1 token per correct pronoun/name use when responding to prompts (max 4 per prompt)- Lose 2 tokens for incorrect pronoun/name use at any time during play	

Player's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Person's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Rule Reminders:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Earn 1 token per correct pronoun/name use when responding to prompts (max 4 per prompt)- Lose 2 tokens for incorrect pronoun/name use at any time during play	

Player's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Person's Name:	Pronouns:
_____	_____
Rule Reminders:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Earn 1 token per correct pronoun/name use when responding to prompts (max 4 per prompt)- Lose 2 tokens for incorrect pronoun/name use at any time during play	

Prompts. Distribute about half of the prompts to each player.

How did you meet [name]?	Describe [name]'s physical appearance.
What job can you imagine [name] doing that isn't _____ current job?	Does [name] have any pets? If not, what pet might _____ like to have?
Tell a funny story about [name].	What are some of [name's] quirks?
Describe what happened the last time you saw [name].	If [name] were a superhero, what would _____ powers be?
What is [name] most likely to become famous for?	What does an average day look like for [name]?
What could [name] give an hour-long presentation about without preparation?	If you made a special meal for [name], what would you make & why?
If [name] could choose one animal ability, what would _____ choose?	If [name] had a secret identity, what kind of secret life would _____ have?
Does [name] have any dreams or aspirations?	What are a few of [name's] best qualities?
Tell two truths and one lie about [name].	Describe [name's] job or favorite hobby.
What is [name] proud of?	How does [name] typically dress?
What is [name] passionate about?	What are [name's] pet peeves?
What was [name] like, or what do you imagine [name] was like, at half their current age?	If [name] were a monarch in charge of a country, what kinds of policies would the country have?
What does [name] have a knack or a talent for?	If [name] had 2 extra hours per day, how would _____ spend them?

Final Thoughts

The work you are doing matters. Thank you for trying this game, and thank you for practicing verbal respect for your loved ones. This game is free and is licensed under Creative Commons, but if you have found it helpful and would like to offer financial support, please consider donating \$5 to [Trans Lifeline](#), a nonprofit run by and for the trans community that offers emotional and financial support to trans people in crisis.

If you have questions or feedback about Pronoun Lowdown, please feel free to contact the author at www.farwoodpsychology.com/contact.

Recommended Resources

[MyPronouns.org](#) ----- Shige Sakurai (they/them)
[How to Use Gender Neutral Words](#) ----- Adryan Corcione (them/them)
[A Quick and Easy Guide to They/Them Pronouns](#) ----- Archie Bongiovanni (they/them)
Tristan Jimmerson (he/him)

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