

**Pronoun  
Primer!  
Familiarize  
Yourself with  
New Pronouns**

**Spivak  
Pronouns**

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This pamphlet was created in Canada, in the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh people.

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Pronoun Primer! Familiarize Yourself with New Pronouns: Spivak Pronouns

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## What are the Spivak pronouns?

*Spivak pronouns are the pronouns used by Michael Spivak in his work "The Joy of Tex", published in 1990.*

*The "Joy of TEX" is not the first instance of the Spivak pronouns being used, but where they were sourced in the future.*

E/Eim/Eir etc were first proposed in the 1890s, from James Rogers in response to the suggestion of using "thon" as the gender-neutral pronoun to replace the he/she binary.

Rogers, James "That Impersonal Pronoun." Editorial.

Comp. William Henry Hills The Writer Boston. Jan. 1890,  
4th ed.: 12-13. Google Books. Google. Web.

Accessed 6 May, 2020.

## Spivak's Explanation

" [...] But I hate having to say  
"he or she" or "his or her" or  
using awkward circumlocutions.

Numerous approaches to this problem  
have been suggested, but one strikes  
me as particularly simple  
and sensible. Just as 'I' is the  
first person singular pronoun,  
regardless of gender, so 'E'  
will be used in this book as the  
third person singular pronoun  
for both genders. Thus, 'E' is the  
singular of 'they'.

Accordingly, 'Eir' (pronounced to rhyme with  
'their') will be the possessive,  
and 'Em' (rhymes with 'them')  
will stand for either 'him' or 'her'."

Spivak, Michael. The Joy of TEX: a Gourmet Guide  
to Typesetting Technical Text by Computer: with  
Numerous Explicit Illustrations.  
American Mathematical Society, 1982.

## The Popularization of the Spivak Pronouns

The Spivak pronouns were picked up by programmer Roger Crew to test the pronoun programming of a game called LambdaMOO.

He had named the "Spivak gender" for Michael Spivak, a mathematics professor who used gender-neutral pronouns for his textbooks. Crew never dreamed that "spivak" would catch on, attributing its success to its intensive use by several particularly active individuals.

"Origins of Gender Options." *CyberSociety 2.0: Revisiting Computer-Mediated Communication and Community*, by Steve Jones, Sage Publications, 1998, p. 141.

"Some gender identities, however, are less transferable to the flesh although they do have physical resonances. The best example of this is what's known as the spivak gender.

Spivak is more representative of an emotional and intellectual state than of a physical configuration. And although the sexuality available to a spivak is a bonus online, it's not the *raison d'être*.

Rather, it's a subtly gender-free condition. It's not androgynous. It's not unisexual. It's simply ambiguous."

Thomas, S., 2003. Sue Thomas: Spivak. [online] Barcelonareview.com. Available at: <[http://barcelonareview.com/35/e\\_st.htm](http://barcelonareview.com/35/e_st.htm)> [Accessed 6 May 2020].

# Conjugation & Examples

**Subject:** E

E is feeling nice today.

**Object:** Em

I gave em a high-five.

**Possessive Adjective:** Eir

Eir day is going great!

**Possessive Pronoun:** Eirs

That dog is eirs.

**Reflexive:** Emself

E decided to treat emself.

## Practice!

The best way to adjust to new pronouns is to practice. Let's give the Spivak pronouns a shot!

\_\_\_\_\_ is having a great time.

Excuse me, but that seat is \_\_\_\_\_.

Duke dyed \_\_\_\_\_ hair and it looks great!

Lucille enjoys buying \_\_\_\_\_ new socks.

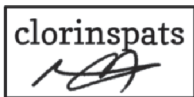
You know, I really enjoy \_\_\_\_\_ company.





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Accordingly, 'Eir' (pronounced to rhyme with 'their') will be the possessive, and 'Em' (rhymes with 'them') will stand for either 'him' or 'her'."

Spivak, Michael. The Joy of TEX: a Gourmet Guide to Typesetting Technical Text by Computer: with Numerous Explicit Illustrations. American Mathematical Society, 1982.

Answers: E, eirs, eir, emself, eir

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