

I'm John Sturtevant, and this is Say What?! A weekly podcast with quick tips to help you communicate clearly at work, at home, and everywhere else you go.

Welcome to Say What?! Episode 14

This week, the last in our series: Ten Quick Tips for Terrific Email

And today's Quick Tip is: Respect, Yo!

In English we have words that refer to groups of mixed genders. I can use they when I'm talking about a group of people over there. Or I can use we when I'm talking about a group of people I'm part of.

But there's not a word I can use when I am talking about just one person and I don't know...um...his or her gender. I have use the awkward phrase his or her or he or she.

Add to that, many people prefer not to be associated with one particular gender.

So, English needs a singular version of they and we. A word that is essentially a human version of the word it.

And we had one for a while. A few years ago, middle school kids in Baltimore started using Yo as a gender-neutral third-person singular pronoun.

Teachers heard students saying things like

Yo put his foot on the desk.

Yo threw a thumbtack at me

Yo is wearing a cool jacket

Well, it seemed like a good time to welcome that word into the English language so the teachers said sure, why not? And for a while, Yo seemed to be gaining some momentum.

But its life as an English pronoun was short lived.

And it's not the first time a clever person has invented a word for that singular pronoun.

In fact, clever word inventors have created dozens of singular pronouns over the years.

But sadly, they don't catch on. It's a mystery.

For now, we're stuck juggling him and her and he and she in our sentences.

Or substituting the plural pronouns they or theirs even when we're talking about just one individual.

And so, although we might be struggling to find a word for that person, I'd like you to start thinking about your Yo, that reader on the other end of your email communication. And give that person some respect.

I don't mean you have to treat everyone with high esteem and reverence.

Rather, I mean respect in the sense of empathy. To realize that not everyone shares your perspective, or your priorities, or your deadlines.

And even though you may have the memory of an elephant, and can instantly recall every detail from your Zoom meeting last Tuesday, that may not be true for your coworkers.

Not only do they have other priorities, people have different ways of understanding and remembering details.

In a previous podcast, I mentioned Visual, Auditory, and Tactile learners.

We all have all three qualities, but some people rank higher in one or two traits. Others are even across all three.

Visual learners tend to be detail oriented, and want specific instructions, and clearly-defined outcomes.

They respond best to visuals - descriptions of events in diagrams and pictures. They want to see what you are talking about.

They like spreadsheets, and budgets, and schedules. They are skilled at processing information and finding relationships between data.

They might avoid talking on the phone, and tend to have a hard time listening to others.

So they're great at remembering details, but not so much broader concepts, or more abstract ideas.

People who are primarily auditory learners tend to be great at understanding abstract concepts, but they don't always follow through as a task gets more detailed.

They respond better to phone calls and face-to-face meetings, rather than information presented visually.

Auditory learners may get frustrated if they're given only facts or instructions without understanding the scope, outcome, or expectations.

They easily remember broad concepts and will make decisions based on breadth of information.

Someone who is mainly a tactile learner may appear cluttered and disorganized. They like to see their things around on their desks, rather than in drawers and cabinets.

They respond to feelings, emotions, intuition, and hunches. They are often very perceptive about subtleties in human character and behavior.

They will make decisions based on instincts, feelings, and how a decision will affect others.

So tactile learners tend to remember how ideas made them feel, or how they affect other people.

If you'd like to identify your primary learning style, you'll find a link to a learning style assessment on the podcast page on my website.

I'll also include more detailed descriptions of these traits, and suggestions for how to work effectively with each learning style.

So this week, as you tap away at your keyboard eagerly meeting all your deadlines, keep your reader in mind, and respect Yo.

Who knows? You just might earn some admiration in return.

That's Say What?! for this week. Thanks for listening!

Support for this podcast comes from The Quins. Their new album "The Woods Look Good" is available everywhere. Check them out at The Quins Band Dot Com and on Facebook and Instagram @thequins. That's Q U I N S.

Learning Style Assessment and

Descriptions: <https://www.johnsturtevant.com/files/624/>

Respect Yo!

Your reader may not share your perspective, your priorities, and your deadlines, or remember details the same way you do.

This week, we explore how people learn and retain information in different ways.