



START HERE!

LGBTQ Terminology

Affirmed gender: The gender to which someone has transitioned.

Agender: A person who does not conform to any gender.

Ally: A term used to describe someone who does not identify as LGBTQ but who is supportive of LGBTQ individuals and the community, either personally or as an advocate. Allies to the LGB community typically identify as "straight."

Androgynous: A non-binary gender identity. Can also be used to describe people's appearances or clothing.

Asexual: An individual who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy or sexual abstinence, which are behaviors, while asexuality is a sexual orientation. Some asexuals do participate in the act of sex, for a variety of reasons.

Assigned sex: The sex (male, female intersex) that is assigned to an infant at birth.

Bisexual: An individual who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to men and women. Sometimes stated as "bi." People who are bisexual need not have had equal sexual experience with both men and women and, in fact, need not have had any sexual experience at all; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Cisgender: A term used to describe an individual whose gender identity aligns with the one typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Closeted: Describes a person who is not open about their sexual orientation, or an ally who is not open about their support for people who are LGBTQ.

Coming out: For people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, the process of self-acceptance that continues throughout one's life. Sometimes referred to as "disclosing" by the transgender community. Coming out can also apply to the family and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender youth or adults. There are many different degrees of being out: some may be out to friends only, some may be out publicly, and some may be out only to themselves. It is up to each person, individually, to decide if and when to come out or disclose.

FTM (Female-to-Male) : A person who was assigned to the female gender at birth but has a male gender identity.

Gay: The adjective used to describe people whose emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction is to people of the same sex. In contemporary contexts, "lesbian" is often a preferred term for women. People who are gay need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Gender: A set of social, psychological, or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations that classify an individual as either feminine or masculine.

Gender-affirming surgery: Surgical procedures that help people adjust their bodies in a way that more closely matches or desired gender identity. Not every transgender person will desire or have resources for surgery. Should be used in place of the older and often offensive term "sex change".

Gender binary: The concept that there are only two genders, male and female, and that everyone must be one or the other.

Gender creative: Also "gender expansive," (or negatively, "gender variant.") A term, often used to describe children and youth, that describes those who dress, behave, or express themselves in a way that does not conform with dominant gender norms.

Gender expression: The manner in which a person chooses to communicate their gender identity to others through external means such as clothing and/or mannerisms. This communication may be conscious or subconscious and may or may not reflect their gender identity or sexual orientation. While most people's understandings of gender expressions relate to masculinity and femininity, there are countless combinations that may incorporate both masculine and feminine expressions—or neither—through androgynous expressions. The important thing to remember and respect is that every gender expression is valid.

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Gender Fluidity: Gender fluidity conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender expression, with interests and behaviors that may even change from day to day. Gender fluid individuals do not feel confined by restrictive boundaries of stereotypical expectations of girls or boys.

Gender identity: One's deeply held personal, internal sense of being male, female, some of both, or neither. One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex (i.e., a person assigned female at birth identifies as male or a person assigned male at birth identifies as female). Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced in infancy and reinforced in adolescence.

Gender neutral: Not gendered. Can refer to language (including pronouns), spaces (like bathrooms), or identities (gender queer, example).

Gender nonconforming: A person who views their gender identity as one of many possible genders beyond strictly female or male. Other terms for gender nonconforming include "gender creative," "gender variant," "genderqueer," "gender fluid," "gender neutral," "bigendered," "androgynous," or "gender diverse." Such people feel that they exist psychologically between genders, as on a spectrum, or beyond the notion of the male and female binary paradigm. Gender nonconforming people sometimes prefer using gender-neutral pronouns such as "their," "ze," or "hir," and are usually comfortable with their bodies as they are regardless of how they express their gender.

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Gender queer: This term represents a blurring of the lines around gender identity and sexual orientation. Genderqueer individuals typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and sexual orientation. This term is typically assigned an adult identifier and not used in reference to preadolescent children

Gender variant: Some people do not use this term because they feel it suggests these identities are abnormal, preferring terms such as "gender creative" and "gender expansive." A term, often used to describe children and youth, that describes those who dress, behave, or express themselves in a way that does not conform with dominant gender norms. (See gender nonconforming.)

Homophobia: An aversion to lesbian or gay people that often manifests in the form of prejudice and bias. Similarly, "biphobia" is an aversion to bisexuality and people who are bisexual, and "transphobia" is an aversion to people who are transgender. "Homophobic," "biphobic," and "transphobic" are the related adjectives. Collectively, these attitudes are referred to as "anti-LGBTQ bias."

Homosexual: An outdated term considered derogatory and offensive, as opposed to the preferred terms, "gay" and lesbian."

Intersex/disorders of sex development (DSD): Individuals born with chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. In the past, medical professionals commonly assigned a male or female gender to the individual and proceeded to perform gender assignment surgeries beginning in infancy and often continuing into adolescence, before a child was able to give informed consent. The Intersex Society of North America opposes this practice of genital mutilation on infants and children. Intersex/ DSD is unrelated to, but often confused with, LGBTQ issues. The medical term "hermaphrodite" was used in the past, but is no longer acceptable.

Lesbian: A woman whose emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction is to other women. People who are lesbians need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

LGBTQ: A shorthand description of sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions typically included when discussing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or queer issues.

MTF (Male-to-Female) : A person who was assigned to the male gender at birth but has a female gender identity.

LGBTQ Terminology continued...

Out: Describes people who openly self-identify as LGBTQ in their public and/or professional lives.

Pansexual: A person whose emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction is to people of all gender identities and biological sexes. People who are pansexual need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Queer: A term currently used by some people, particularly youth, to describe themselves and/or their community. Some value the term for its defiance, or because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and others find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Traditionally a negative or pejorative term for people who are gay, "queer" is disliked by many within the LGBT community, who find it offensive. Due to its varying meanings, this word should only be used when self-identifying or quoting someone who self-identifies as queer. (i.e. "My cousin self-identifies as genderqueer.")

Questioning: A term used to describe those who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or a combination thereof.

Sex: Refers to biological, genetic, or physical characteristics that define males and females. These can include genitalia, hormone levels, genes, or secondary sex characteristics. Sex is often compared or interchanged with gender, which is thought of as more social and less biological, though there is some considerable overlap.

Sexual orientation: Emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings toward other people. People who are gay or lesbian experience these feelings primarily for people of the same sex, people who are bisexual experience these feelings for people of both sexes, and people who are asexual experience no sexual attraction at all. Other terms include (but are not limited to) pansexual and polysexual. Sexual orientation is part of the human condition, while sexual behavior involves the choices one makes in acting on one's sexual orientation. One can have sex with someone and even have children, but that doesn't necessarily define or align with their sexual orientation. It is important to remember that one's sexual activity does not define who one is with regard to one's sexual orientation; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Transgender: A term describing the state of a person's gender identity which does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Other terms commonly used are "female to male" (FTM), "male to female" (MTF), and "genderqueer." Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity (also referred to as "transsexual.") Also used as a broad umbrella term to describe those who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression.

Transition: The process one goes through to discover and/or affirm their gender identity. This can, but does not always, include taking hormones, having surgeries, or going through therapy.

Transsexual: What's the difference between being transgender and transsexual? "Transsexual" is a less frequently used—and sometimes misunderstood—term (considered by some to be outdated or possibly offensive, and others to be uniquely applicable to them) which refers to people who are transgender who use (or consider using) medical interventions such as hormone therapy or surgery (or a combination of the two) or pursue medical interventions as part of the process of expressing their gender. There are also people who identify as "transgender" who seek medical intervention.

TGNC: Acronym which stands for trans and gender nonconforming. Used when talking about people with diverse gender identities.