

LGBTQ Terminology

LGBPTQQA+: a combination of letters trying to represent identities in the queer community. This version represents Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual.

Ally: a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support the social equality of a marginalized group they are not a part of. Example: a straight person who is an ally to the LGBTQ community.

Androgyny: a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity.

Asexual: a person who generally does not feel sexual attraction to any group of people. Asexuality is a sexual orientation and differs from celibacy or sexual abstinence, which are behaviors.

Biological Sex: the physical anatomy and gendered hormones a person is born with. Words that describe sex are male, female, and intersex. Example: someone who is biologically female typically has XX chromosomes, minimal body hair, and a vagina.

Bisexual: a person who has sexual and romantic attractions to both men and women.

Cisgender: a person who identifies with the gender assigned to them at birth. Also referred to as not transgender. Example: a biological female who identifies as a woman.

Cis-sexism: behavior and policies that grant special treatment to cisgender people, reinforces the idea that being cisgender is somehow better or more “right” than being transgender, or ignores transgender people. Example: Forms that ask for gender only give two options, male and female.

Closeted: a person who is keeping their sexuality or gender identity a secret and has yet to “come out of the closet.”

Coming out: the process of discovering for yourself and letting people know your sexual orientation or gender identity. Coming out is often thought to be a one-time event, however this is a lifelong and sometimes daily process.

Cross-dressing: wearing clothing that conflicts with the traditional gender expression of your biological sex and gender identity. Cross-dressing happens for a number of reasons including relaxation, fun, or sexual gratification and should not be confused with being transgender or gay. Example: a man wearing women’s underwear.

Drag King: a person, typically a woman, who dresses in an exaggerated masculine style and personifies male gender stereotypes as part of an individual or group routine for public entertainment. Performing drag should not be confused with being transgender or gay.

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Drag Queen: a person, typically a man, who dresses in an exaggerated feminine style and personifies female gender stereotypes as part of an individual or group routine for public entertainment. Performing drag should not be confused with being transgender or gay.

Dyke: an offensive slang term used for lesbian women. This term has been reclaimed by some lesbian women as a symbol of pride but should not be used by those outside the community.

Faggot: an offensive slang term used for gay men. This term has been reclaimed by some gay men as a symbol of pride but should not be used by those outside the community.

Female: the biological sex of a person with a specific set of sexual anatomy. Typically a female has XX chromosomes, a vagina, ovaries, a uterus, breasts, higher levels of estrogen and minimal body hair.

Fluid: generally this term is used with other terms attached, like gender-fluid or fluid-sexuality. Fluid describes an identity that is a shifting mix of the options available. Example: someone who identifies as gender-fluid may wear stereotypically feminine, masculine, and androgynous outfits.

FTM: a medical term used to describe a transgender man. It stands for Female to Male.

Gay: a man who has sexual and romantic attractions to men. This term is also sometimes used for all people who have same-sex attraction.

Gender: Socially constructed attitudes, characteristics, and behaviors assigned to a person's biological sex. Some words that describe gender are man, woman, and transgender.

Gender affirmation surgery: surgical procedures that change a transgender person's body to conform to their gender identity. The minority of transgender people choose to and can afford to have these surgeries. Outdated and inaccurate terms for this include: sex change operation, gender reassignment surgery, and sex reassignment surgery.

Gender binary: a traditional and outdated view of gender which limits gender possibilities to only "man" and "woman." This view of gender leaves out the possibility of transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

Gender Expression: the outward expression of gender identity, typically displayed through a combination of dress, demeanor, and social behavior.

Gender Identity: how a person feels or expresses their gender. Examples: man, woman, genderqueer.

Gender-nonconforming: a person who does not follow stereotypical ideas about how they should look or act based on the gender they were assigned at birth.

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Genderqueer: a person who doesn't identify as either male or female, but rather something outside the traditional binary gender system.

Hermaphrodite: an outdated and offensive medical term used to describe someone who is intersex.

Heterosexism: behavior and policies that grant special treatment to heterosexual people, reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is somehow better or more "right" than queerness, or ignores queerness. Example: a sexually active woman is assumed by health care providers to be heterosexual and in need of information on birth control.

Heterosexual: a person who is attracted to someone of a different gender. Also referred to as straight.

Homophobia: the fear, discomfort, intolerance, or hatred of homosexuality or same-sex attraction.

Homosexual: a person who is attracted to someone with the same gender. This term is considered offensive and stigmatizing by many members of the community.

Intersex: a person with a set of sexual anatomy that doesn't fit within the labels of female or male. Example: a person with XXY chromosomes or someone with both a uterus and a penis. Many people born intersex are assigned a gender at birth and given surgeries in infancy and childhood.

Lesbian: a woman who has sexual and romantic attractions to women.

Male: the biological sex of a person with a specific set of sexual anatomy. Typically a male has XY chromosomes, a penis, testis, facial hair, higher levels of testosterone, and coarse body hair.

MTF: a medical term used to describe a transgender woman. It stands for Male to Female.

Outing: revealing the sexual or gender orientation of a person without their permission.

Pansexual: a person who experiences sexual and romantic attraction for members of all gender identities and expressions.

Gender pronouns: the set of pronouns a person would like others to use when talking to or about that person. Example: she/her/hers or they/them/theirs

Queer: a term often used by younger members of the community, urban populations, activists, and academics to broadly refer to either a person's gender or sexual orientation or the community as a whole. This term was historically offensive but has been reclaimed by many in the LGBTQ community. It should only be used cautiously by those outside the community.

Questioning: the process of exploring one's gender or sexual orientation.

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Same-Gender Loving (SGL): a culturally affirming African American gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity.

Sexual orientation: a person's sexual or romantic interest. Examples: lesbian, gay, heterosexual.

Tranny: an offensive slang term used for transgender people. This term has been reclaimed by some transgender people as a symbol of pride but should not be used by those outside the community.

Transgender: a person who does not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. Other appropriate terms would be transwoman or transman. Example: a biological female who identifies as a man.

Transphobia: the fear, discomfort, intolerance, or hatred of transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

Transitioning: the process of a person developing and assuming a gender expression to match their gender identity.

Transsexual: a medical term used to describe a person who does not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth and is undergoing gender affirmation surgery. This term is outdated and should be avoided unless asked to use it by a transsexual person.

Transvestite: a person who cross-dresses. Not to be confused with transgender or transsexual. This term is outdated and should be avoided unless asked to use it by a transvestite person.

Two-Spirit: a term traditionally used by some Native American tribes to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders.