

LGBTQ2S+ Quick Glossary & Pronoun Basics



Pronoun Basics

“Jennifer went to the store, as xe was out of milk.”

“Prashanth is running late due to work, they will be joining us later.”

“Hello, my name is Alex, and my pronouns are he/him or she/her. How should I refer to you?”

1. Normalize introducing your pronouns along with your name when meeting people. Don't force others to do so if they wish not to (see 5).
2. Getting a person's pronouns wrong is not the end of the world: apologize, don't make a big fuss of it, and remember them in the future.
3. Some people may use a pronoun set you are not familiar with - it is okay to ask how to use them.
4. Some people may use more than one set of pronouns, and sometimes they may wish to be referred to by one set and at other times by another set. Ask if you aren't sure.
5. When someone doesn't offer their pronouns upon introduction, it is fine to use the gender neutral “they” to refer to them. This is okay, and grammatically correct. You may also find typing “they” is easier than “he or she.”

Gender Identity

A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices (see non-binary and/or genderqueer, below). Unlike gender expression (see below) gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression

External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Sex

Sex (male or female) is determined at birth based on the appearance of a baby's genitalia, and is distinct from gender identity and expression. However, on legal documentation it is more generally understood to refer to someone's gender identity and thus transgender and non-binary people often seek to change it. Sex is also tied to chromosomal expression for many people; however, most people do not know their chromosomes and it is far more complicated than just XX or XY. For the purposes of gender identity and expression, sex is only relevant insofar as common misunderstandings lead to social and

legal barriers for people (particularly trans and non-binary) accessing care. For more information see <http://slate.com/technology/2018/11/sex-binary-gender-neither-exist.html>

Agender

Agender is a term which can be literally translated as 'without gender'. It can be seen either as a non-binary gender identity or as a statement of not having a gender identity. For more information see <http://gender.wikia.org/wiki/Agender>

Asexual

An adjective used to describe people who do not experience sexual attraction (e.g., asexual person). A person can also be aromantic, meaning they do not experience romantic attraction. For more information, visit <http://asexuality.org>.

Cisgender

A term used by some to describe people who are not transgender. "Cis-" is a Latin prefix meaning "on the same side as," and is therefore an antonym of "trans-."

Intersex

An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that can't be classified as typically male or female. Those variations are also sometimes referred to as Differences of Sex Development (DSD). Avoid the outdated and offensive term "hermaphrodite." While some people can have an intersex condition and also identify as transgender, the two are separate and are not interchangeable. For more information, visit <http://interactyouth.org>.

The glossary items here are taken (and slightly edited for length) from [GLAAD's Media Reference Guides](#), the EGALE Canadian Human Right's Trust [page on Two-Spirit people](#), and the [Gender Wiki](#). This list is intended to be a quick reference guide and should not be considered a complete glossary of all terms or the final authority on LGBTQ2S+ terms and identities.

Non-binary and/or genderqueer

Terms used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for transgender and should only be used if someone self-identifies as non-binary and/or genderqueer.

Pansexual

A term used by some queer people attracted to people of all gender identities, and who find the term bisexual too tied to a binary thinking (man and woman) of gender.

Sexual Orientation

Describes a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer.

Queer

An adjective used by some people, particularly younger people, whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual (e.g. queer person, queer woman). Typically, for those who identify as queer, the terms lesbian, gay, and bisexual are perceived to be too limiting and/or fraught with cultural connotations they feel don't apply to them. Some people may use queer, or more commonly genderqueer, to describe their gender identity and/or gender expression (see non-binary and/or genderqueer below). Once considered a pejorative term, queer has been reclaimed by some LGBT people to describe themselves;

however, it is not a universally accepted term even within the LGBT community. When Q is seen at the end of LGBT, it typically means queer and, less often, questioning.

Transgender (adj.)

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms - including transgender. Use the descriptive term preferred by the person. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. Note that transgender is an *adjective*, and not a verb. "Transgendered" is incorrect.

Transition

A social, medical and/or legal process by which a transgender or non-binary person outwardly alters their identity to match their internal self-identity. This can be as simple as dressing differently and coming out to others or as complicated as physical surgery and legal documentation change. Not all are in a safe environment where they can come out, and may face legal, social, or financial barriers to transition. As such, transitioning should not be considered a necessary part of transgender or non-binary people's identities and it is considered rude to ask.

Two-Spirit

Some indigenous people in Canada identify as Two Spirit rather than, or in addition to, identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer. Prior to European arrival, Two Spirit people were respected members of their communities and were often accorded special status based on their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives. These identities were recognized and celebrated from a young age as gifts from the creator; Two Spirit people were often the visionaries, healers and medicine people. The term Two Spirit affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity — including gender, sexuality, community, culture, and spirituality. It is an English term used to stand in for the many indigenous words for those with sexual and gender diverse identities. Many Two Spirit and their teachings were lost due to the impacts of colonization.

It's OK if you're not ready yet.



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