

## **LGBTQ Terminology**

Ally: An individual whose attitudes and behavior are supportive and affirming of all genders and sexual orientations and who is active in combating homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and cissexism both personally and institutionally.

Asexual: A person who doesn't experience sexual attraction or who has low or no interest in sexual activity. Unlike celibacy, a state of being that people choose, asexuality is a sexual identity. There is considerable diversity among the asexual community; each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction, and arousal somewhat differently.

Assigned Sex: The sex recorded on a person's birth certificate, generally determined by a cursory visual inspection of an infant's external genitalia. Assigned sex may or may not be congruent with a person's gender identity or with other biological markers of sex such as chromosomes and internal reproductive structures.

Bisexual/Bi: A person who has sexual and emotional relationships with or feelings towards both women and men, although not necessarily at the same time.

Cisgender: Not transgender, that is, having a gender identity and/or expression that society considers appropriate for one's assigned sex. Often shortened to "cis," which is pronounced "sis."

Coming Out/Being Out: The process through which a person acknowledges, accepts, and learns to appreciate their lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity. Sharing this information with others is not a single event but instead a life-long process.

Gay: Used to describe a man who is romantically, sexually, and/or affectionally attracted to men, although not all men who engage in sexual relations with other men identify themselves as "gay." The term is sometimes used to refer to the LOB community as a whole, although many women prefer to be identified as "lesbian" instead of "gay."

Gender: A term used to describe the social status of people as men, women, boys, girls, or variously transgender, including characteristics of masculinity and femininity that are learned or chosen. A person's assigned sex does not always match their gender (see Transgender), and many people display traits of more than one gender. Gender is related by different to sex and sexuality.

Gender Binary: Recognizes only two genders and regulates behavior within narrowly male or female expectations. Enforces the idea that all males should be man-identified and masculine, and all females should be woman-identified and feminine.

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Gender Dysphoria: Diagnostic condition in the American Psychiatric Association's DSM-5; previously referred to as "Gender Identity Disorder." This diagnosis is controversial as it is often necessary for trans people to receive medical treatments and insurance coverage, but many people reject it because they do not believe that being transgender is a disorder.

Gender Expression: The external presentation of a person's gender (e.g. dress, mannerisms, hair style, speech, etc.). One's gender expression may differ from one's gender identity.

Gender Identity: An individual's internal understanding of oneself as a woman, man, transgender, genderqueer, etc. This may or may not match one's gender expression or the way that other people perceive one's gender.

Gender-neutral/Gender-free Pronouns: Pronouns which do not associate a gender with the person or creature being discussed. The English language has no truly gender-neutral third person pronoun available, but some examples of other options include "they/them/their" or "hir" for "him/her" or "ze" for "he/she."

Gender non-conforming/Genderqueer: A gender identity adopted by some trans people who blur the lines of the gender binary or embrace gender fluidity. They may identify as a man, woman, both, or neither.

Heterosexism/Heteronormativity: A set of attitudes that is consistent with the belief that heterosexuality is a superior psychological, social and moral stance. This serves to create an invisibility or lack of validation and representation for people/relationships that are not heterosexual.

Internalized Homo/Bi/Transphobia: The fear and self-hate of one's own homosexuality, bisexuality, or transgender identity in individuals who have learned negative ideas about these groups throughout childhood. One form of internalized oppression is the acceptance of the myths and stereotypes applied to the oppressed group. It can result in depression, alienation, anxiety, and, in extreme cases, suicide.

Intersex: A person born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that is not considered medically standard for either male or female. The gender identity and sexual orientation of these people varies as it does with non-intersex people. Assigning a sex to an intersex infant may involve surgical procedures to align the appearance of the genitals to the medical standard for either male or female. This practice has been criticized by many in the intersex community and remains a point of contention and controversy.

Lesbian: Preferred term for a woman who is romantically, sexually, and/or affectionally attracted to women. The name is taken from the island of Lesbos where Sappho, the great women-loving poet of 600 BC lived. Many women who love women adopt this name with pride.

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Pansexual/Omnisexual/Polysexual: A person who is attracted to all or many genders or gender expressions.

Passing: Being taken for a member of the dominant group - white, straight, cisgender (non-transgender), for example. LGBTQQIAA people who have the ability to pass can choose to conceal the stigma associated with being a member of a sexual minority.

Queer: Originally a pejorative word, this term has slowly been reclaimed starting in the 1990s with the emergence of Queer Theory. Usually this term is used as a self-affirming umbrella term for the LGBTQIA community, though it may still cause offense to some people.

Questioning: A process whereby an individual is re-assessing his or her sexual orientation and/or gender identity. A person who is "questioning" may be unsure of their identity or still exploring their feelings.

Same Gender Loving (SGL): A term used often by LGBTQIA African-Americans as a less stigmatized description for one's sexual orientation. It helps provide an identity not marginalized by racism within the gay community or heterosexism in society.

Sex: The biological (anatomical, hormonal, or genetic) traits used to categorize someone as either male, female or intersex.

Sexual Orientation: A person's emotional, physical, and sexual attraction and the expression of that attraction with other individuals. The term "sexual orientation" is preferred over "sexual preference." The latter term implies a choice and sexual attraction is not generally considered a choice.

Transgender/Trans: A term for people who challenge society's view of gender as fixed, unmoving, dichotomous, and inextricably linked to one's biological sex. Gender is more accurately viewed as a spectrum, rather than a polarized, dichotomous construct. This is a broad term that encompasses cross-dressers, intersex people, transsexuals and those who defy societal gender roles. The sexual orientation of transgender people varies just as it does among cisgender people.

Transition: The process of a transgender individual changing their gender presentation in society. Transitioning often includes changes in name, clothing and appearance, and may include anatomical/biological changes. Transitioning is sometimes confused with gender-confirming surgery which is only one element of transitioning. Many people who transition choose not to have surgery as transitioning is more holistic and can encompass physical, psychological, social, legal, and emotional changes. Some genderqueer and intersex people have little or no desire to undergo surgery to change their body but will transition in other ways.

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Trans Man/Transmasculine: Identity label preferred by some female-to-male transgender people. Genderqueer and gender non-confirming people who were assigned female at birth and now adopt a more masculine gender expression may also identify as transmasculine.

Trans Woman/Transfeminine: Identity label preferred by some male-to-female transgender people. Genderqueer and gender non-confirming people who were assigned male at birth and now adopt a more feminine gender expression may also identify as transfeminine.

Two-Spirit/Twin Spirit: Native American concept present in some indigenous cultures across North America and parts of Central and South America. It is a term of reverence, traditionally referring to people who display both masculine and feminine sex or gender characteristics, as well as manly hearted women who have lived a heterosexual life and produced children and after the death of her husband take female-lovers and are accepted by the community in that role. Named "berdache" by European colonists, those who are Two-Spirited are and were traditionally respected and may be healers or leaders thought to possess a high spiritual development.

*Adapted from "The Amherst College Queer Resource Center's Terms, Definitions, and Labels"  
compiled by David Huante.*