

# LGBTQIA+ GLOSSARY OF TERMS



## **Sexuality and Sexual Orientation**

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**Abrosexual** – Someone who has different levels of sexual or romantic attractions throughout their life; they may also have changes in their sexual orientation over time.

**Alloromantic** – Someone who experiences emotional attraction to others.

**Allosexual** – Someone who experiences sexual attraction to others.

**Aromantic** – Someone who experiences little to no romantic attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in forming romantic relationships.

**Asexual** – A person who experiences little to no sexual attraction to others.

**Bisexual** – Someone who experiences attraction to more than one gender (see also “Pansexual”).

**Demioromantic** – Someone who experiences romantic attraction to individuals with whom they’ve formed a strong emotional bond.

**Demisexual** – Someone who experiences sexual attraction to individuals with whom they’ve formed a strong emotional connection.

**Gay** – Someone who is romantically or sexually attracted to members of their own gender; Gay can also refer more specifically to male/masculine-aligned individuals who are attracted to other male/masculine-aligned individuals; sometimes used as an umbrella term for the LGBTQ+ community.

**Graysexual** – Someone who feels occasional sexual attraction may identify as graysexual, which directly references the “gray areas” of sexuality.

**Lesbian** – A woman/feminine-aligned person who is romantically or sexually attracted to other women/feminine-aligned persons, including trans and nonbinary folx.

**Omnisexual** – Someone attracted to people of all gender identities and sexual orientations

**Polysexual** – Someone who is attracted to people of multiple genders. The term “polysexual” suggests a greater variety of sexual orientations than traditional gender binaries of male and female, or hetero- and homosexual.

**Romantic vs. Sexual Attraction** – Romantic refers to emotional attraction, whereas sexual refers to physical attraction.

**Sexuality/Sexual Orientation** – Describes one’s romantic and/or sexual attraction to others; one might be attracted to: one’s own gender, another gender, multiple genders, or no one at all!

**Pansexual** – Someone who experiences attraction to all genders or attraction to someone regardless of their gender.

## **Gender and Gender Identity**

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**Agender** – Someone who feels they have no gender or that their gender is neutral.

**Alexigender** – Someone who knows they move between genders but are uncertain what gender they are experiencing at a specific time.

**Assigned Sex** – The sex assigned to someone by the doctor who delivers them, typically based on the doctor’s visual assessment of one’s genitalia either by ultrasound or at birth; an ineffective way of determining both biological sex and gender.

**Bigender** – Someone who identifies as two genders either simultaneously or over time; could be male/female or could include nonbinary gender identities.

**Biological Sex** – Biological sex determination and development is a complex process that begins in utero and continues through puberty; it can even continue throughout life in certain cases. Sex development is dependent on many factors that include both genetics and one’s environment. Since many factors play a role in determining one’s biological sex, sex (like gender) occurs along a spectrum.

**Cisgender** – Someone whose gender identity matches the sex assigned to them at birth (i.e., “When I was born, the doctor said I was female, and that feels right to me”).

**Cross-dresser** – Someone who wears clothing or makeup normally associated with a different gender. Distinct from drag performers in that cross-dressing is often private or done in such a way that doesn't draw unwanted attention. Drag performers normally wear exaggerated makeup for entertainment purposes.

**Demiboy & Demigirl** – Someone who identifies mostly, but not entirely with that particular gender (i.e., demiboy: mostly male, but not entirely).

**Drag** – A form of entertainment in which the artist adopts a theatrical persona and performs, often in highly stylized ways, across genders. Although drag is very much a part of LGBTQ+ culture, it is separate and distinct from gender identity and sexual orientation.

**Gender** – Who you are, how you define yourself; facets of gender include one's gender identity and gender expression.

**Gender Confirming Medical Care** – Medical transition involves bringing a person's body into alignment with their gender identity and is only one part of transition. One type of medical transition is hormone replacement therapy, prescribed by a doctor.

**Gender Confirmation Surgery (GCS)** – Gender confirmation surgeries can be another part of medical transition. Not all transgender people choose to, are physically healthy enough to, or can afford to undergo surgeries. Replaces the outdated and offensive phrase "sex reassignment surgery." Do not refer to someone as being "pre-op" or "post-op".

**Gender Dysphoria** – The feeling of discomfort or distress caused when your assigned sex does not align with your gender identity.

**Gender Expression** – How you present your gender to the world; usually expressed through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, etc.; your gender expression may or may not conform to socially defined characteristics of masculinity or femininity.

**Gender Identity** – Your inner knowledge of your gender; for instance, knowing that you are a man; a person's gender may or may not match their assigned sex.

**Gender Incongruence** – Gender incongruence is the term used to describe when your gender is different to when you were born. People with gender incongruence may describe themselves as transgender (trans) or gender diverse.

**Gender Non-Conforming** – A term used to describe people whose gender expression differs from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. **Please note that many cisgender people have gender expressions that are gender non-conforming. Simply having a non-conforming gender expression does not make someone trans or nonbinary.** Not all transgender people are gender non-conforming. Many transgender people have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Do not describe someone as gender non-conforming simply because they happen to be a transgender person.

**Genderfluid** – Someone whose gender identity is not fixed, changing from day to day or over time. Sometimes young people explore gender before determining a stable gender identity or expression; sometimes gender fluidity continues throughout a lifetime.

**Genderflux** – The experience of having different levels of intensity in gender identity over time.

**Genderqueer** – An umbrella term for someone who does not follow binary gender norms. They include non-binary, agender, pangender, genderfluid, or other gender identities.

**Intersex** – An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, and in others, they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations may not be physically apparent at all. Some people born with intersex traits prefer the term “Difference of Sex Development” rather than “intersex.”

**Neutrois** – Someone who feels they have no gender or that their gender is neutral; a relatively new term (see also “agender”).

**Nonbinary** – Someone who does not identify as exclusively male or female. Nonbinary people may identify as being both, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. Some nonbinary individuals identify as transgender, but not all do.

**Pangender** – A person whose gender identity is not limited to one gender and who may feel like a member of all genders at the same time.

**Preferred Pronouns vs. Personal Pronouns** – It’s becoming more common for people to introduce themselves at meetings or in other places with their name and their pronouns: “Hi, I’m Alex and my pronouns are he/him.” Until recently, “preferred pronouns” was the term used to refer to an individual’s

pronouns, but “preferred” is no longer used because your pronouns are not a matter of preference, they’re a fundamental aspect of your identity.

**Transgender** – Someone whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth (i.e., “When I was born, the doctor said I was female, but that doesn’t feel right to me.”) Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Transgender people may be straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

**Transition** – Transition is the process a person undertakes to bring their gender expression and/or their body into alignment with their gender identity. It is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time typically and the exact steps involved vary from person to person. Transition can include:

- **Social Transition** Telling family, friends, and co-workers, using a different name, using different pronouns, dressing differently, starting or stopping wearing make-up and jewelry, etc.
- **Legal Transition** Changing your name and/or sex marker on documents like a driver’s license, passport, Social Security record, bank accounts, etc.
- **Medical Transition** Hormone replacement therapy and/or one or more surgical procedures.

It is important to note that being transgender is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. A person can call themselves transgender the moment they realize that their gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth. Some transgender people may not feel they need to take any transition steps at all, while other trans people may wish to transition but cannot due to cost, underlying medical conditions, and/or fear of consequences from transphobic family, employers, etc. Avoid the dated and offensive language “sex change”.

**Two-Spirit** – An umbrella term for a centuries-old concept among the indigenous peoples of what is now known as North America. The term itself originated in the 1990s. Definitions are specific to each tribal nation. Although a person gets to define their own gender identity, “two-spirit” is distinctly a part of indigenous cultural traditions and should only be used by members of indigenous communities.

## Miscellaneous

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**Folks vs. Folx\*** – Folks is a great non-gendered way to refer to a group of people instead of, for example, “ladies and gentlemen.” The word “folx”

developed as a way to refer specifically to LGBTQ+ groups of people and as a way to signal identity with and/or understanding of the LGBTQ+ community.  
\*Has been used in a derogatory way towards transgender individuals.

**Heteronormative** – Relating to a worldview that regards gender roles as fixed to biological sex and heterosexuality as the “normal” and “preferred” orientation.

**Homophobia, Transphobia** – The fear, hatred, or aversion for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender; the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual or cis gender. Can lead to discrimination; extreme instances can lead to violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community.

**Outing** – Involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status; outing someone can be a huge safety issue and should be avoided.

**Straight Privilege** – Advantages (often unrecognized and unacknowledged) granted to people because they are heterosexual. Some examples include not having to “come out” upon initially meeting someone; living with the cultural assumption throughout life that heterosexuality is the norm; and not having to fear discrimination or violence because of your sexual orientation.

**Queer** – Originally a derogatory term, “queer” has been largely reclaimed by the LGBTQIA+ community as an umbrella term for the community and to more fully represent fluid identities and orientations. HOWEVER, the term remains somewhat contentious, even within the community, so be mindful of how and when and if you use it, and if you use it, do so with respect.

**Questioning** – Refers to the process of exploring one’s gender and/or sexuality.

## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

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**AFAB/AMAB** – Assigned Female At Birth/Assigned Male At Birth; these terms are used when referring to the sex a trans person was assigned when they were born.

**DSD** – Differences in sexual development. An estimated 1 in 4,500 children is born with anatomical sex that appears at odds with their gonadal or chromosomal sex, and as many as 1 in 100 are born with sex development

that doesn't fall into the typical male or female phenotype but varies along a spectrum. These conditions are sometimes not found until later in life.

**LGBTQIA+** – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual; the + exists to acknowledge genders, sexualities, and identities beyond the existing acronym.

**NB vs. Enby** – Historically, NB has been used as shorthand for “nonbinary” but also in communities of color to refer to Non-Black folks (Non-Black People of Color). To avoid confusion and as a gesture of respect for the pre-existing use of “NB” among BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), the term “enby” was adopted to refer to nonbinary folx.

**Trans** – Used as shorthand for *transgender*, and on second reference after first using the word transgender. Mainstream audiences may not understand its meaning or what you are referencing.

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Resources include: <https://www.glaad.org/reference>,  
<https://www.glsen.org/resources/virtual-resources>, <https://www.hrc.org/resources>,  
<https://www.webmd.com>, <https://www.lgbtqnation.com>