

Foundational Terminology

Sex The classification of people as male or female. At birth infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on the birth certificate at birth) However, a person’s sex is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

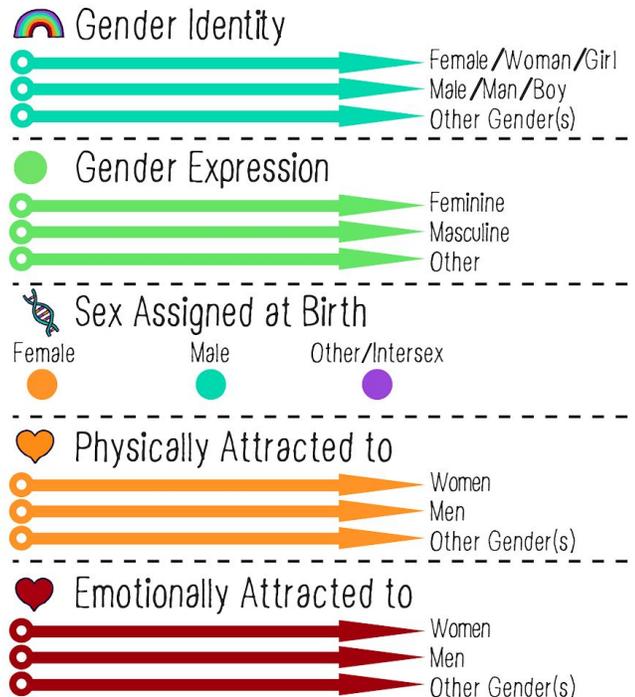
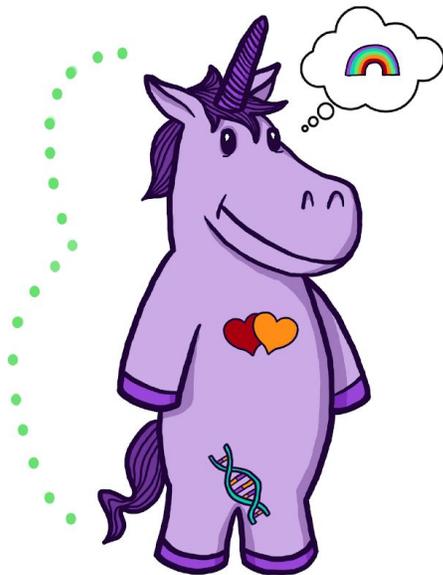
Gender Identity One’s internal, deeply held sense of one’s gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Many people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression External manifestations of gender, expressed through one’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Expression may or may not correlate with gender identity and does not imply gender identity. Some transgender people might seek to have their gender expression match their gender identity but not in all cases.

Sexual Orientation Describes an individual’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, or bisexual. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would identify as a straight woman

The Gender Unicorn

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Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

LGBTQIA Alphabet Soup

Lesbian Can be used as a noun or adjective. A woman who is romantically or sexually attracted to other women.

Gay Can be used as a noun or an adjective. Adjective: Sexually or romantically attracted to someone of the same gender. Noun: A man who is romantically or sexually attracted to other men. Note: Sometimes used as an umbrella term for all LGBTQ people.

Bisexual Noun or adjective. Adjective: Sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender. Noun: a person who is sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender.

Transgender Always used as an adjective. 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.

Queer Umbrella term used for people who are not straight and or who are not cisgender. Originally meaning "strange" or "peculiar", queer came to be used pejoratively against those with same-sex desires or relationships in the late 19th century.

Intersex general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

Asexual An asexual person ("ace", for short) is simply someone who does not experience sexual attraction. That's all there is to it. Aces can be any sex or gender or age or ethnic background or body type, can be rich or poor, can wear any clothing style, and can be any religion or political affiliation.

TRANSGENDER-SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

Always use a person's chosen name and pronouns.

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. Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the individual. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures.

Transsexual (adj.) An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions (including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries). Unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word transgender. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: transsexual woman or transsexual man.

Trans Used as shorthand to mean transgender or transsexual - or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities under the transgender umbrella. Because its meaning is not used the same across all communities, be thoughtful when using it with audiences who may not understand what it means. Avoid unless used in a direct quote or in cases where you can clearly explain the term's meaning in the context of your story.

Transgender man People who were assigned female at birth but identify and live as a man may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten it to trans man. (Note: trans man, not "transman.") Some may also use FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male. Some may prefer to simply be called men, without any

modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Transgender woman People who were assigned male at birth but identify and live as a woman may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten to trans woman. (Note: trans woman, not “transwoman.”) Some may also use MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female. Some may prefer to simply be called women, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Transition Altering one’s birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one’s family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. Avoid the phrase “sex change.”

Chosen Name When many trans folks transition, a name that better reflects their gender is chosen. Some people will legally change their names and others will not. If a trans person chooses not to legally change their name, still use their chosen name.



Pronouns A word that takes the place of a noun. Examples: he, she, they, someone, who. In English, people are referred to by pronouns. Some people change their pronouns when they transition. This also includes gender non-binary pronouns such as they or them.

Gender Confirmation Surgery ~~Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)~~ Refers to doctor-supervised surgical interventions, and is only one small part of transition (see transition above). Avoid the phrase “sex change operation.” Do not refer to someone as being “pre-op” or “post-op.” Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries. Journalists should avoid overemphasizing the role of surgeries in the transition process.

Gender Dysphoria In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association released the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) which replaced the outdated entry “Gender Identity Disorder” with Gender Dysphoria, and changed the criteria for diagnosis. The necessity of a psychiatric diagnosis remains controversial, as both psychiatric and medical authorities recommend individualized medical treatment through hormones and/or surgeries to treat gender dysphoria. Some transgender advocates believe the inclusion of Gender Dysphoria in the DSM is necessary in order to advocate for health insurance that covers the medically necessary treatment recommended for transgender people. Others believe that Gender Dysphoria is not necessary, and instead medicalizes the community unnecessarily, especially for those that experience Gender Euphoria.

Gender Euphoria A feeling of comfort and joy around one’s gender identity. This is not a replacement for Gender Dysphoria for all people, and some can experience them in conjunction with one another. Gender experiences are on a continuum- think of it this way: someone can fall anywhere on this continuum at any point in their transition, or in their lifetime. Gender Dysphoria is not something one needs a medical diagnosis to experience, and neither is gender euphoria.

OTHER TERMS YOU MAY HEAR

You may hear the following terms when doing research on transgender issues or speaking to a trans person.

As these terms are not commonly known outside the LGBTQ community, they will require context and definition if used in mainstream media. Their inclusion here is for informational purposes.

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-.” A more widely understood way to

describe people who are not transgender is simply to say non-transgender people.

Gender Non-Conforming or Gender Non-Binary A term used to describe some people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. Please note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming. Many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional -- that fact alone does not make them transgender. Many transgender men and women have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Simply being transgender does not make someone gender non-conforming. The term is not a synonym for transgender or transsexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming.

Genderqueer A term 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 or transsexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as genderqueer.

Cross-dresser or Drag Queen While anyone may wear clothes associated with a different sex, the term cross-dresser is typically used to refer to heterosexual men who occasionally wear clothes, makeup, and accessories culturally associated with women. This activity is a form of gender expression, and not done for entertainment purposes. Cross-dressers do not wish to permanently change their sex or live full-time as women. Replaces the term "transvestite."

PLEASE NOTE: Transgender women are not cross-dressers or drag queens. Drag queens are men, often gay men, who dress like women for the purpose of entertainment. Be aware of the differences between transgender women, cross-dressers, and drag queens. Use the term preferred by the individual. Do not use the word "transvestite" at all, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.

TERMS TO AVOID

Problematic: "transgenders," "a transgender" Preferred: transgender people, a transgender person

Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, "Tony is a transgender," or "The parade included many transgenders." Instead say, "Tony is a transgender man," or "The parade included many transgender people."

Problematic: "transgendered" Preferred: transgender The adjective transgender should never have an extraneous "-ed" tacked onto the end. An "-ed" suffix adds unnecessary length to the word and can cause tense confusion and grammatical errors. It also brings transgender into alignment with lesbian, gay, and bisexual. You would not say that Elton John is "gayed" or Ellen DeGeneres is "lesbianed," therefore you would not say Chaz Bono is "transgendered."

Problematic: "transgenderism" Preferred: none This is not a term commonly used by transgender people. This is a term used by anti-transgender activists to dehumanize transgender people and reduce who they are to "a condition." Refer to being transgender instead, or refer to the transgender community. You can also refer to the movement for transgender equality.

Problematic: "sex change," "pre-operative," "post-operative" Preferred: transition Referring to a "sex-change operation," or using terms such as "pre-operative" or "post-operative," inaccurately suggests that one must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition.

Problematic: "biologically male," "biologically female," "genetically male," "genetically female," "born a man," "born a woman" Preferred: assigned male at birth, assigned female at birth or designated male at birth, designated female at birth Problematic phrases like those above are reductive and overly-simplify a

very complex subject. As mentioned above, a person's sex is determined by a number of factors - not simply genetics - and one's biology does not "trump" one's gender identity. Finally, people are born babies - they are not "born a man" or "born a woman."

DEFAMATORY TERMS

Defamatory: "deceptive," "fooling," "pretending," "posing," "trap," or "masquerading" Gender identity is an integral part of a person's identity. Do not characterize transgender people as "deceptive," as "fooling" or "trapping" others, or as "pretending" to be, "posing" or "masquerading" as a man or a woman. Such descriptions are defamatory and insulting.

Defamatory: "tranny," "she-male," "he/she," "it," "shim" These words dehumanize transgender people and should not be used in mainstream media. The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. So that such words are not given credibility in the media, it is preferred that reporters say, "The person used a derogatory word for a transgender person." Please note that while some transgender people may use "tranny" to describe themselves, others find it profoundly offensive.

*Adapted from **Glaad Media Reference Guide (Ninth Edition, August 2014)***