

LGBTQ+ Terminology

RECOMMENDATIONS



Language evolves rapidly, just like our communities, so staying updated on terminology matters. If you make a mistake, that's okay! Apologize and make an effort to learn and use the most respectful terminology next time.

“

CISGENDER, adj.

”

Describes a person who **does** identify with their gender assigned at birth.

INSTEAD OF THIS

biological man / biological woman

These terms imply that biology is inherently binary, which is false. Biology is far more complex than a binary of penis = man, vagina = woman. Biological sex is much more diverse, much like every other part of human biology.

TRY THIS

cis man / cis woman

Describes a man who was assigned male at birth or describes a woman who was assigned female at birth.

Cisgender people know themselves to align with this assignment at birth.

“

TRANSGENDER, adj.

”

Describes a person who does **not** identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

INSTEAD OF THIS

A transgender / transgendered

“Transgender” is an adjective. It is not a verb or a noun. Inserting the article “a” before or adding “-ed” at the end implies something has happened to cause someone to be transgender, which is misleading.

TRY THIS

trans man / trans woman
He is transgender

A man assigned female at birth.

A woman assigned male at birth.

***TRANSITION, noun or verb:** Refers to any step or steps a person takes to affirm their gender identity. Transition can be social, medical, or both—and it looks different for everyone. A person does not need to transition in any specific way to be transgender. If someone tells you they are transgender or nonbinary, the best practice is to trust that they know themselves—and to respect their identity.

“
NONBINARY, adj.
”

Describes a person who does not fit into the gender binary.

There is no one way to be nonbinary

Not all nonbinary people are androgynous, thin, or white. Nonbinary identity is diverse—and there’s no single look, experience, or pronoun that defines it. Other nonbinary identities include genderfluid, genderqueer, two-spirit, agender, bigender, neutrois.

Nonbinary gender often falls under the transgender umbrella. However, not all nonbinary people identify as transgender or use that term for themselves.

Transphobia can sometimes be disguised as “correct grammar.” The use of “they/them” to refer to a single person is grammatically correct—recognized by Merriam-Webster in 2019 when “they” was named Word of the Year.

“
SEX
”

Usually refers to the gender a person is assigned at birth, which is deduced by examining the external genitalia of a fetus or newborn. Other similar terms include birth sex or biological sex, or “what were you born as?”

INSTEAD OF THIS

He was born a girl. He was born a female.

These phrases suggest that biology is strictly binary, which is misleading. In reality, biology is far more complex than just male or female.



TRY THIS

He was assigned female at birth.

A best practice is to use “gender assigned at birth” or “assigned gender” to refer to a person’s assignment at birth.

“
GENDER IDENTITY
”

An internal sense of one’s own gender. This is not determined by gender assigned at birth.

“
GENDER EXPRESSION
”

How one presents their gender; bound by social and cultural constructs, epoch, etc. (masculine, feminine, androgynous, butch, femme, drag). This is not determined by and does not have to match a person’s gender assigned at birth

“
SEXUAL ORIENTATION
”

The classification of one’s attraction towards others (e.g. gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, etc). This is also not determined by and does not have to match a person’s gender assigned at birth

Language is powerful—and so is your effort to grow. Keep learning, listening, and showing up with respect.