

Queering *Language*

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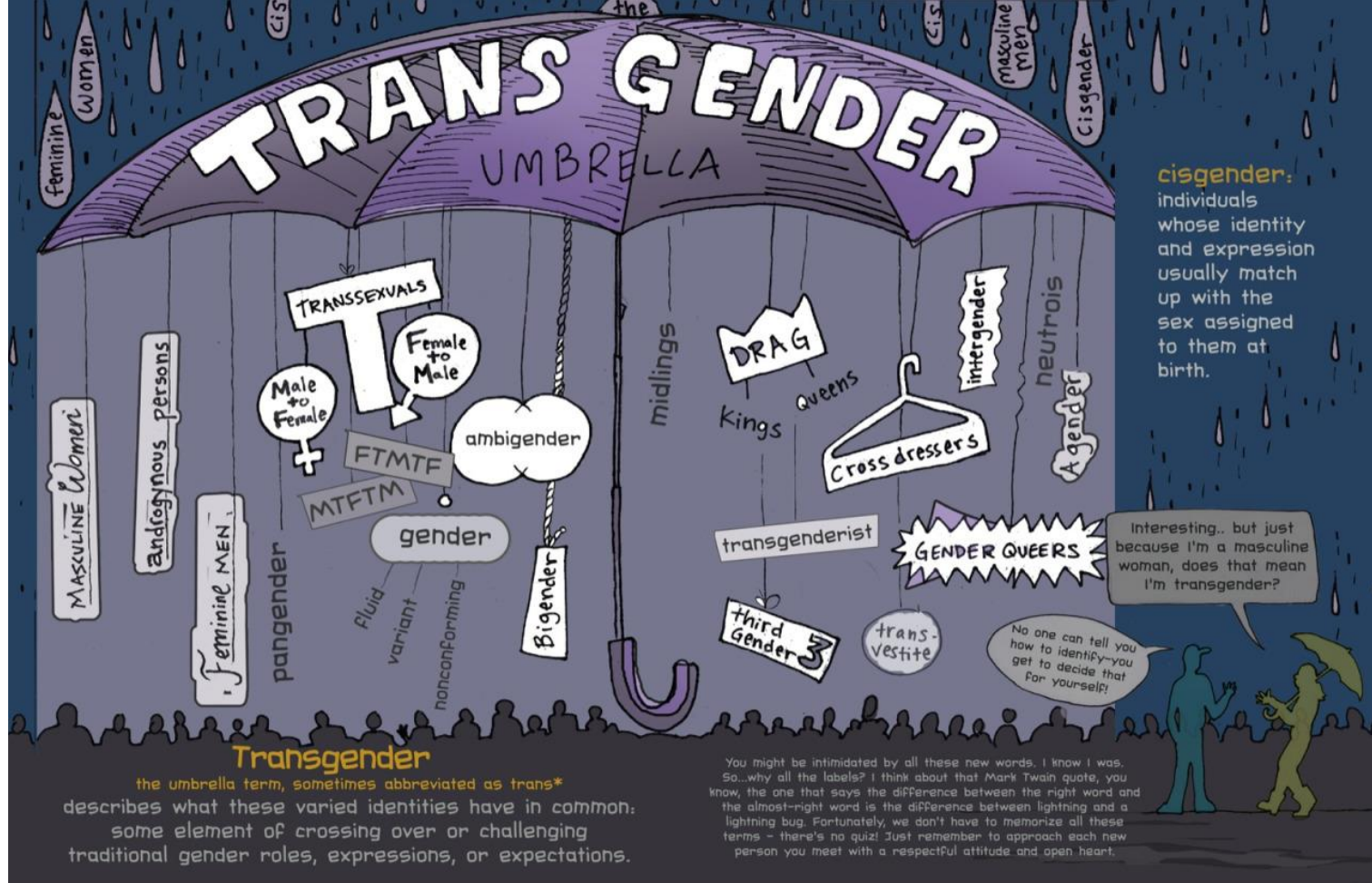


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cisgender:
 individuals whose identity and expression usually match up with the sex assigned to them at birth.

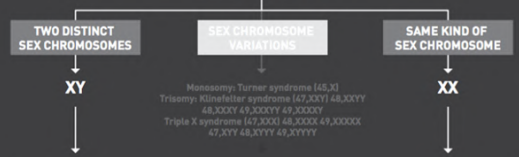
Transgender

the umbrella term, sometimes abbreviated as **trans*** describes what these varied identities have in common: some element of crossing over or challenging traditional gender roles, expressions, or expectations.

You might be intimidated by all these new words. I know I was. So...why all the labels? I think about that Mark Twain quote, you know, the one that says the difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug. Fortunately, we don't have to memorize all these terms - there's no quiz! Just remember to approach each new person you meet with a respectful attitude and open heart.

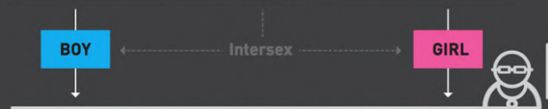


Embryo Stage



GENETICS AND BIOLOGICAL SPECTRUM
Anatomical sex involves both what's visible (outer genitalia) and what's only visible through blood work (sex chromosomes), surgery or MRIs (internal sex glands and organs). We still associate biological sex with genitals, although that's only part of the story.

You're assigned a sex

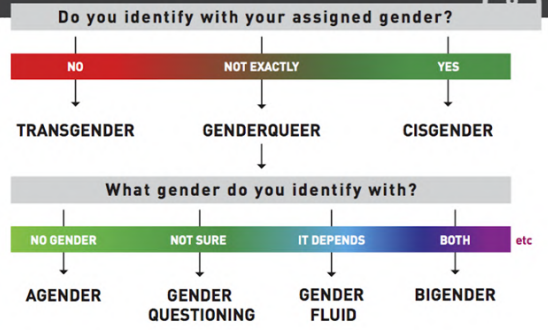


BINARY SEX
A doctor assigns us a sex when we are born. Even the one in 1,000 intersex children who are born are often assigned a sex regardless of the signs their bodies aren't unambiguously male or female.

THE JOURNEY TO GENDER

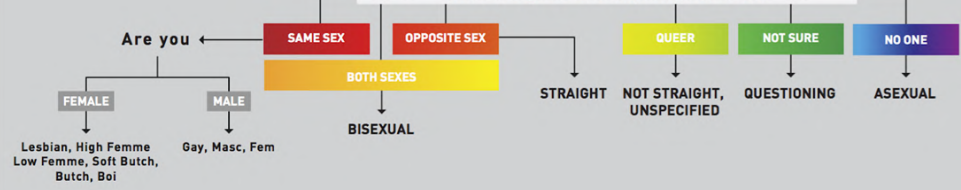
ASSIGNED
AFFIRMED

Each of us is assigned a sex at birth, and at some point in our lives we decide that we're either comfortable or not comfortable in our assigned gender. For cisgender people, assigned sex and gender identity more or less align, but for transgender and genderqueer people, the road to affirming gender is trickier.



GENDER SPECTRUM
People no longer have to identify as men or women if those categories don't suit them. Cisgender and transgender people tend to have one gender identity, male or female, while broader categories like genderqueer or gender nonconforming fall somewhere on a spectrum.

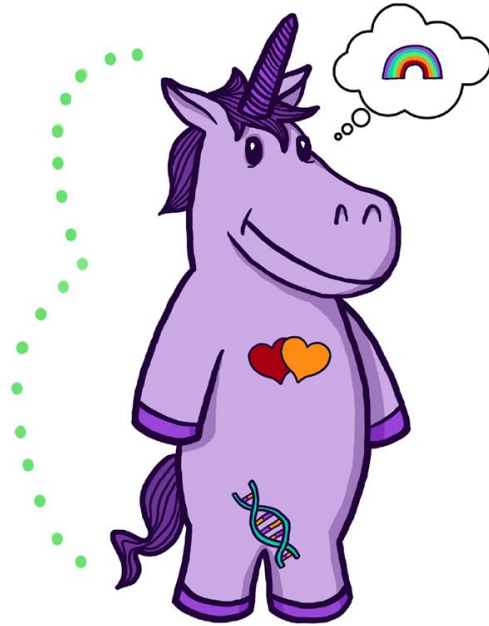
Who are you sexually attracted to?



SEXUALITY SPECTRUM
Sexual orientation is often confused with gender. Separate, though interrelated, sex and gender are uniquely complex ways in which we identify ourselves and our desires.

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



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

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

But **who cares?**

It's **too complicated.**

There are **too many acronyms.**

The language **keeps changing.**

This **doesn't apply** to me.

It's **too PC.**

“Labels are important. They allow us to not only understand the world around us, but ourselves. Many of us struggle with what labels to apply to ourselves. We cycle through them, try them on like shirts, and discard the ones that do not fit. Some of us try on many more labels, while others may be perfectly fine with those assigned to them through others. I mean, some of us do take longer to get ready, no?”

Lucian Clark, *Through Labels We Exist*
genderterror.com, 2013

“People often say to me, ‘Well, Ash, I don't care. I don't see race or religion or sexuality. It doesn't matter to me. I don't see it.’ But I think the opposite of homophobia and racism and xenophobia is not love, it's apathy. If you don't see my gayness, then you don't see me.

If it doesn't matter to you who I sleep with, then you cannot imagine what it feels like when I walk down the street late at night holding her hand, and approach a group of people and have to make the decision if I should hang on to it or if I should I drop it when all I want to do is squeeze it tighter. And the small victory I feel when I make it by and don't have to let go. And the incredible cowardice and disappointment I feel when I drop it. If you do not see that struggle that is unique to my human experience because I am gay, then you don't see me. If you are going to be an ally, I need you to see me.”

Ash Beckham, “When You Take a Stand - And When to Let It Go”

TEDxBoulder, 2014

“People need to **be willing to let go** of what they think they know about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman.”

Laverne Cox

Glossary of Terms

General	Gender Identity	Gender Expression	Sex	Sexual Orientation
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Disclaimer: This is a living list.

To borrow from the *Transgender Umbrella*:

“You might be intimidated by all these words. I know I was. So...why all the labels? I think about that Mark Twain quote, you know, the one that says the difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug. Fortunately, we don't have to memorize all these terms - there's no quiz! Just remember to approach each new person you meet with a **respectful attitude** and **open heart**.”

General Terms

Ally *Noun.* Someone who supports equal civil rights, gender equality, and LGBTQ social movements; advocates on behalf of others; and challenges fear and discrimination in all its forms.

-Binary *Noun.* The belief that such things as gender identity have only two distinct, opposite, and disconnected forms. In other words, they believe in the gender _____, or that only male and female genders exist. As a rejection of this belief, many people embrace a non-_____ gender identity.

Coming Out *Verb, noun.* The process through which a person accepts their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as part of their overall identity. For many, this involves sharing that identity with others, which makes it more of a lifetime process rather than just a one-time experience.

Intersection- ality

Noun. The idea that multiple identities intersect to create a whole that is different from its distinct parts. To understand someone, it is important to acknowledge that each of their identities is important and inextricably linked with all of the others.

LGBT+

Adjective. The acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.” Sometimes it includes a plus sign that represents the fact that many communities choose to expand the acronym to include other identities.

-Normativity

Noun. The belief that certain identities are correct or normal at the expense of all others. It is important to challenge these beliefs, and to recognize that “normal” does not really exist in and of itself, but rather is created, and any privileges attached to such notions are discriminatory.

Pride

Noun. The celebration of LGBTQ identities, and of the global LGBTQ community's resistance against discrimination and violence. _____ events are celebrated in many countries around the world, usually during the month of June to commemorate the Stonewall Riots of 1969, a pivotal moment in the modern LGBTQ movement.

Queer

Adjective. In a very basic sense, anyone who is not heterosexual and/or cisgender. In the past, queer was a negative or pejorative term for people who are gay, and thus it is sometimes disliked. But the term is increasingly being used to describe all identities and politics that go against normative beliefs. As such, the term is valued by many LGBTQ people for its defiance and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities.

Questioning

Noun. A time in many people's lives when they question or experiment with their gender expression, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation. This experience is unique to everyone; for some, it can last a lifetime or be repeated many times over the course of a lifetime.

Gender Identity

Our deeply held, **internal sense of self** in relation to gender - as male, female, a blend of both, neither, or something else entirely. It's who we internally know ourselves to be.

Agender

Adjective. A person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.

Bigender

Adjective. A person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (and sometimes a third gender).

Cisgender, or cis *Adjective.* A person whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth.

Genderfluid *Adjective.* Someone whose gender identity and/or expression varies over time.

Genderqueer *Adjective.* Someone whose gender identity and/or expression falls between or outside of male and female.

Intergender *Adjective.* Someone whose identity is between genders and/or a combination of gender identities and expressions.

Pangender

Adjective. Someone whose identity is comprised of all or many gender identities and expressions.

Third Gender

Adjective. A person who does not identify with either man or woman, but identifies with another gender. It is also a conceptual term used by individuals who want to move beyond the gender binary.

Transsexual

Adjective. Someone who has undergone, or wishes to undergo, gender affirmation surgery. (NOTE: This is an older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Many transgender people do not identify as _____, although the term is preferred by some.)

Transgender, or trans

Adjective. Someone whose gender identity differs from the one that was assigned to them at birth. Many _____ people identify as either male or female, while others may see _____ as an umbrella term and identify as gender nonconforming or queer. How _____ people choose to express their gender is individualistic, as is their transition.

Many **non-Western communities** define their gender identity in terms that are unique to their native language and culture. For example, some individuals identify as:

Two-spirit - a modern umbrella term used by some **Native persons** (but usually considered to be specific to the **Zuni tribe**) to describe gender-variant individuals.

Mahu - a word originating in ancient **Hawaii and other parts of Polynesia** to describe a third-gendered person that is not male or female but both or neither. After colonization, it was common to use this term pejoratively, but it is now being reappropriated.

Hijra - a term common in **South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan**, to refer to individuals who identify as women or trans but were assigned male at birth.

Takatapu - a **Maori** word meaning a devoted partner of the same gender, now accepted as an umbrella term similar to queer.

Gender Expression

How we **present our gender** in the world and how society, culture, community, and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. External manifestations of gender can be expressed through one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics.

Androgynous
, or
androgyne

Adjective. A person appearing and/or identifying as neither male or female, or is presenting a gender either mixed or neutral.

Butch or
masc

Adjective. Someone whose gender expression is masculine. _____ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label. In many communities of color in the United States, words like “stud” and “aggressive” are commonly used instead.

Crossdresser

Noun. Someone who wears clothes associated with a different gender. This activity is a form of gender expression, and is not always done for entertainment purposes. Many _____ may not wish to present as a different gender all of the time.

Drag

Noun, adjective. The act of presenting as a different gender, usually for the purpose of entertainment.. Many people who do _____ may not wish to present as a different gender all of the time.

Femme, or fem

Adjective. A person who identifies themselves as feminine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally.

Gender Confirming Surgery

Noun. Medical procedures that some individuals elect to undergo to change their physical appearance to more closely resemble how they view their gender identity.

**Gender
Expansive**

Adjective. When a person's identity or behavior is broader than the commonly held definitions of gender and gender expression in one or more aspects of their life.

**Gender Non-
Conforming**

Adjective. Someone whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not conform to the cultural or social expectations of gender, particularly in relation to male or female. This can be an umbrella term for many identities.

**Stemme,
or stem**

A person whose gender expression falls somewhere between a stud and a femme (or masculine and feminine).

Transition

Noun. The process through which some transgender people change their gender expression to more closely resemble how they view their gender identity. Some transgender people may not choose to make these changes, or may only make a few. The experience is an individualistic one; there is no right or wrong way to transition.

Sex

Traditionally, this is 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.) However, a person's sex is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. In essence, it's our body, our experience of our own body, how society genders bodies, and how others interact with us based on our body.

Intersex

Adjective. Someone who, due to a variety of factors, has reproductive or sexual anatomy that do not seem to fit the typical definitions for the female or male sex. Some people who are _____ may identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, while many others do not.

Sexual Orientation

The desire (or absence thereof) for intimate **emotional and/or sexual relationships** with people of the same gender, a different gender, or multiple genders..

Asexual

Adjective. A person who doesn't experience sexual attraction, or who experiences attraction but does not feel the need to act out that attraction sexually. Instead, the desire can be to get to know someone or to get close to them in whatever way works best for that person. Many who experience attraction may often be attracted to a particular gender, or even identify with a specific sexual orientation.

Bisexual, or bi

Adjective. Someone who is attracted to those of their same gender as well as to those of a different gender (for example, a woman who is attracted to both women and men). Some people use the word _____ as an umbrella term to describe individuals that are attracted to more than one gender.

Gay

Adjective. Someone who is attracted to those of their same gender. This is often used as an umbrella term, but is used more specifically to describe men who are attracted to men.

Lesbian

Adjective, noun. A woman who is attracted to other women. Some _____ prefer to identify as gay women.

Pansexual, or pan

Adjective. A person who experiences sexual attraction, romantic love, or emotional attraction toward people of any sex or gender identity. This may be considered a sexual orientation in its own right or a subset of bisexuality, to indicate an alternative sexual identity. For some, pansexual is considered a more inclusive term than bisexual. Others use the term interchangeably with omnisexual, although the two definitions can vary depending on how gender is viewed.

Straight

Adjective. A word to describe women who are attracted to men and men who are attracted to women. This is not exclusive to those who are cisgender. For example, some transgender men identify as straight because they are attracted to women.

Gynesexual

Adjective. Someone who is primarily sexually, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to women, females, and/or femininity.

Androsexual

Adjective. Someone who is primarily sexually, romantically, and or emotionally attracted to men, males, and/or masculinity.

Skoliosexual

Adjective. A person who is primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to genderqueer, transgender, transsexual, and/or other non-binary people.

*We're going to leave terms describing **sexual expression** for another day.*

But this isn't only about
adopting **new words**.

It's about ditching some
problematic ones, too.

Terms to Avoid

Homosexual

Because of the clinical history of the word, it is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered.

Transgenders, a transgender, transgendered

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.” The adjective transgender should never have an extraneous “-ed” tacked onto the end.

Sex change, pre-operative, post-operative

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.

**Biologically or
genetically
[male/female],
born a
[man/woman]**

Problematic phrases like these 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."

Any others you'd like
to retire?

This is all great.



But what about

pronouns?

Gender Pronouns

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

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Design by Landyn Pan

For more information,
go to transstudent.org/graphics

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What does all of
this look like
in practice?

what's with the x in Latinx?



mitú

#TheKatCall

Here are a **few tips**
that might help:

- 1. Default to using someone's name** if possible, and try using “they” as a singular pronoun more often in many different kinds of situations.
- 2. Ask appropriate questions, preferably in non-public settings.** (“How do you identify?” “Which pronoun do you prefer I use?”)
- 3. Embrace their answers,** and try not to express an opinion (there's a big difference between “thank you” and “oh, cool” or “interesting.”)
- 4. Carry on.** Don't make it awkward or about you. Avoid asking invasive questions or apologizing profusely.
- 5. Do your own research.** Other people, especially strangers and acquaintances, are not responsible for your education.

“My hope is that our language will someday be as **fluid as gender identity itself**, and, eventually, words will serve as accurate ambassadors of our vibrant and varied gender identities. *But we’re not there yet.*”

Emerson Whitney, “*Queering Language*”

Huffington Post, 2011

To learn more, go to

www.itgetsbetter.org/

GLOSSARY



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Share your story

The It Gets Better Project connects young LGBTQ+ people with the global LGBTQ+ community by providing access to a library of uplifting and inspiring stories of hope, resilience, and determination. Share your story of how it got better and provide countless young adults with the inspiration you wish you had while growing up.

VIDEO GUIDELINES



www.itgetsbetter.org/ShareYourStory

Q&A