



LGBTQ+ Terminology

Wondering what all of those letters mean? Wondering what pronoun to use? Here is a glossary of some of the most commonly used terms.



Because language matters, knowing terms for gender identities, sexual orientation, and common pronouns is key. This glossary contains words and meanings important to the LGBTQ+ community and is designed to help you become more comfortable and make conversations with your prospects and clients easier.

Don't Assume.

It's always best to ask. Listen to how a person refers to themselves.

Common Terms

Ally

An ally is an individual who is actively supportive of and who speaks out and stands up for a person or group that is targeted and discriminated against.

Asexual

A person who does not experience sexual attraction; they may or may not experience emotional, physical, or romantic attraction.

Bisexual

A person who is attracted to members of more than one sex, gender, or gender identity.

Cisgender

Someone who identifies with the gender identity aligns with their physical sex at birth.

Gay

A common term for men who are attracted to other men.

Gender Binary

The division of gender into two distinct and opposite categories (man and woman). Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth.

Gender Expression

The external display of one's gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors.

Gender Identity

The internal perception of one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be.

Intersex

A 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.

Lesbian

A common term for women who are attracted to other women.

LGBTQ+

An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of the community.

Pansexual

Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender.

Polyamory

The state of having multiple sexually or romantically committed relationships at the same time, with the consent of all partners involved.

Queer

An umbrella term which embraces many sexual preferences, orientations, and habits that are counter to mainstream. It is also a sexual orientation or gender identity label denoting a non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender orientation. This word was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Questioning

The process of exploring one’s own sexual orientation or gender identity.

Romantic Orientation

Describes an individual’s pattern of romantic attraction based on a person’s gender(s) regardless of one’s sexual orientation.

Same Gender Loving (SGL)

A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

Sex assigned at birth

The sex, male, female or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

Sexual orientation

An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation.

Transitioning

A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents.

Common Pronouns		Gender Neutral Pronouns	
SHE	HE	THEY	ZE
HER	HIM	THEM	HIR
HERS	HIS	THEIRS	ZIR

What if I make a mistake?

It happens. Apologize, correct yourself, and move on. If you make a mistake in front of a group, you may want to apologize to the person in private later.

If you have questions, politely ask the person how they identify or if they feel comfortable giving examples of how to use pronouns.

Here are a few ways you can do this....

- “What pronouns do you use?”
- “How would you like me to refer to you?”
- “How would you like to be addressed?”
- “Can you remind me which pronouns you like for yourself?”

Visit the WE CARE LGBTQ+ Landing Page to learn more.



Resources: <https://lgbtq.wfu.edu/resources/lgbtq-terminology/> and <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

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