

RISE LGBTQ Glossary

The definitions offered here can help when navigating the often-confusing world of sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity. Please remember, however, not to impose any of these words as labels upon LGBTQ youth. Ask youth how they self-identify and ask about language that makes them feel safe. If they choose to avoid self-identifying terms, honor their decision—doing this will clearly indicate to children and youth their right to be who they are and to be safe.

Affirm: To acknowledge or assert as fact; here, to assert one's own sexual orientation or gender identity strongly and publicly or to openly acknowledge and publicly assert the rights and dignity of LGBTQ people.

Ally: A person or organization that actively aligns and uses their resources to support individuals and communities with a specific issue; here, an individual who openly supports and affirms the rights and dignity of LGBTQ people may be considered an ally.

Androgynous: A gender expression that has both masculine and feminine elements.

Anti-Gay Bias: Hatred, discrimination or aversion to Lesbian Gay Bisexual people, people perceived to be LGB, or those associated with person who are LGB. Often referred to as Homophobia.

Anti-transgender Bias: Hatred, discrimination or aversion to Transgender or Gender Variant people, people perceived to be as such, or those associated with persons who are transgender or gender variant. Often referred to as Transphobia.

Biological Sex: The sex assigned at birth by a doctor; based on physical anatomy and hormones. Designations include male, female or intersex. Also referred to as Assigned Sex at Birth.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to people of their own gender as well as another gender.

Cisgender: A description for a person whose gender identity and biological sex align. (e.g., a person identifies as a man and was assigned male at birth by a doctor).

Cisgender Privilege: The implicit and explicit privileges that cisgender people exercise. These privileges include the ability to use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, physical intimidation or arrest. The privileges also encompass freedom from questions about one's anatomy (often by strangers) and the freedom from frequent misgendering. Cisgender people also enjoy a presumed "validity" as a man/woman/human and this validity is not based on surgical procedures or how well one "passes" as a man/woman/human, etc.

Coming out: The process of acknowledging one's sexual orientation or gender identity to oneself and/or individuals in one's life; often incorrectly thought of to be a one-time event, this is a lifelong and sometimes daily process.

Cross Dress: To cross-dress is to wear clothing most often associated (in one's culture and historical timeframe) with people of the other gender.

Drag queen/drag king: Someone who dresses and acts like the opposite gender for entertainment purposes; usually does not self-identify as transgender.

Female-to-male (FTM): a person who transitions from female to male; a person who was assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a male. Similar self-identifications for this term may include: transgender man, transgender boy, transman.

Feminine: A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of females.

Gay: A term used to describe a man who is attracted to another man; this term may also be used by women attracted to another women.

Gay-straight alliance (GSA): Formal organization of LGBTQ and straight people in support of the dignity and rights of LGBTQ people, usually developed in the context of creating change in educational institutions and environments.

Gender: Social and cultural expression of sex; not biological sex.

Gender conformity: Acting within socially and culturally expected gender roles.

Gender expression: The ways in which an individual communicates their gender to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, etc.; not an indication of sexual orientation.

Gender fluid: An individual whose gender identity may continually change throughout their lifetime. These individuals may not feel confined within the socially and culturally expected gender roles and in fact may identify differently from situation to situation.

Gender identity: One's internal, personal sense of their gender. Gender identity is best represented as a spectrum and an individual may move around this spectrum. Some terms that are associated with this spectrum are Male, Female, Gender Fluid, Genderqueer, Trans*, Transgender and Two-Spirit. Although these are not the only terms. Some individuals may identify as male and female or even neither male nor female.

Gender neutral: Anything (such as clothing, styles, activities, or spaces) that a society or culture considers appropriate for anyone, irrespective of gender; anything that carries with it no particular gender associations.

Gender nonconformity: Expressing gender and/or having gender characteristics that do not conform to the expectations of society and culture. Also referred to as gender variant or gender creative.

Gender role: Culturally or socially determined sets of attitudes and behaviors that are expected of an individual based on her/his assigned sex at birth or perceived sex.

Genderqueer (also gender queer): An umbrella term some people use to describe themselves when their experience of their gender identity falls out of the binary of male or female.

Heterosexism: A dominant notion that everyone is heterosexual (or should be) and that heterosexuality is superior, better, and preferred.

Heterosexual: Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to a person(s) of the opposite gender with which one identifies; sometimes referred to as being straight.

Heterosexual Privilege: The privileges that heterosexual people have because of heterosexism. Being heterosexual carries with it privileges that may be explicit or implicit such as the right to marry, adopt children, be a foster parent, fair employment etc.

Homosexual: Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to a person(s) of the same gender with which one identifies. Although some individuals may identify with this term, it is now a dated term that has negative connotations and is considered derogatory.

Identity: What, how, and who one perceives oneself to be; a multi-faceted component of self-concept and can evolve throughout one's life span.

In the closet: The intentional concealment of an individual's own gender identity and/or sexual orientation, usually due to fear of discrimination and/or violence; can cause isolation and psychological pain.

Intersex: A general term constructed to describe a variety of conditions for a person born with an anatomy that someone decided is not standard (or typical) to be defined as male or female due to chromosomal, hormonal, and reproductive differences. Chromosomal, hormonal, and reproductive differences can include extra or missing chromosomes, elements of both male and female reproductive systems, or genitalia that do not appear clearly male or clearly female at birth.

Lesbian: a term used to describe a woman who is attracted to another woman.

LGBTQ: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning or Queer.

Male-to-female (MTF): a person who transitions from male to female; a person who was assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a female. Additional self-identifications for this term may include: transgender woman, transgender girl, transwoman.

Masculine: A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of males.

Misgender: To refer to another person as a gender with which they do not identify. This could be done intentionally to cause emotional and psychological harm or unintentionally because of assumptions.

Out: Openly acknowledging one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity; may be partial (that is, out to some people and not to others). Sometimes referred to as being "out of the closet."

Outed: When someone else accidentally or deliberately reveals another's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, usually without permission.

Pride: National, citywide, and neighborhood local events and programs, usually during the month of June in celebration of the ongoing fight for equality for LGBTQ people.

Queer: Historically, this was a derogatory slang term used to identify LGBTQ people. It is now a term that some LGBTQ people are reclaiming and embrace as a symbol of pride that represents all individuals who fall outside of the gender and sexual orientation "norms".

Questioning: Being unsure of where one's primary attraction or gender identity lies.

Safe space: A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, cultural background, age, and/or physical or mental ability; a place where the rules guard each person's self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others.

Same gender loving: A term created by the African-American LGBTQ community and used by some people of color who see 'gay' and 'lesbian' as terms more connected to a white lesbian or gay identity.

Sexism: Discrimination and unfair treatment based on sex or gender in which advantage is usually afforded to men and not women.

Sexual Behavior: The physical, intimate acts one may do with another person(s) for physical pleasure. This is distinct from sexual orientation.

Sexual Orientation: Describes the emotional, romantic, and physical feelings of attraction-usually-over a period of time; it is distinct from sexual behavior.

Trans*: An umbrella term that refers to all non-cisgender identities within the gender identity spectrum.

Transgender: An individual whose gender identity differs than their biological sex.

Transsexual: A medical term historically used to identify a person who has undergone hormone and surgical procedures to attain the physical characteristics that affirms their gender identity. Although some individuals may identify as transsexual, this term is now considered a derogatory term.

Transition: A term used to describe the process of moving from one sex/gender to another, Sometimes this is done by hormone or surgical treatments.

Two-Spirit: A term traditionally used by Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders; often considered part male and part female or wholly male and wholly female; often revered as natural peace makers as well as healers and shamans.



The RISE Initiative is funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant number 90-CT-0154.

RISE adapted this LGBTQ Glossary from the following sources:

Anti-Defamation League. Retrieved from: <http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/glossary-of-education-terms.pdf>

California Safe Schools Coalition. (2005). *Safe Schools Resource Guide*. Retrieved from California Safe Schools Coalition website: <http://www.casafeschools.org/resourceguide/glossary.html>

Gay-Straight Alliance Network/Tides Center and Friends of Project 10. (2001). *Make It Real Manual: A student organizing manual for implementing California's School Nondiscrimination Law (AB 537)*. Retrieved from GSA Network website: <http://66.160.205.104/ab537/pdf/manual.pdf>

Girl's Best Friend Foundation and Advocates for Youth. (2005). *Creating Safe Space for LGBTQ Youth: A Toolkit*. Retrieved from Advocates for Youth website: <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/safespace.pdf>

It's Pronounced MetroSexual <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com>

Intersex Society of North America. (2008). *What is Intersex?*. Retrieved from the Intersex Society of North America website: http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex

National Association of Social Workers & Lambda Legal Defense. (2009). *Moving the margin: Curriculum guide for child welfare services with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth in out-of-home-care*. Retrieved from Lambda Legal website: http://data.lambdalegal.org/publications/downloads/mtm_moving-the-margins.pdf

UC San Diego Lesbian Bisexual Gay Transgender Resource Center. (2007). *LGBTQIA Terminology*. Retrieved from UC San Diego Lesbian Bisexual Gay Transgender Resource Center: http://lgbtro.ucsd.edu/LGBTQIA_Terminology.asp

Youth Pride Inc. (2010). *Definitions*. Retrieved from Youth Pride website: <http://www.youthprideri.org/Resources/Definitions/tabid/187/Default.aspx>