



LGBT Vocabulary 101

Language is constantly changing, and these definitions are not by any means comprehensive. They do however provide a basic understanding that allows for further dialogue and exploration.

Ally: any heterosexual person who opposes heterosexism and homophobia and actively supports LGBT individuals and causes.

Bisexual: a person who has significant romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions to members of both sexes. The frequency, intensity, or quality of attraction is not necessarily directed toward both sexes equally.

Cisgender: a term used to describe those who are not-transgender - having a gender identity or performing in gender roles that society considers appropriate for one's sex.

Coming out: coming to terms with one's sexual or gender identity. Can also mean stating openly that one is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. The term is usually applied to members of the LGBT community, but heterosexual people can experience a similar process of coming to terms with their sexual orientation and/or their identity as an ally.

FTM: female-to-male. Indicates a transgender individual who was originally assigned the gender of female at birth, but has claimed a male identity through clothing, surgery, or attitude changes.

Gay: a man whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to other men. This term can also be used to apply to lesbians, bisexuals, and on some occasions, be used as an umbrella term for all LGBT people.

Gender Identity: how one thinks of one's own gender. This conviction is not entirely contingent upon the individual's biological gender/sex.

Genderqueer: a rejection of the gender binary (male/female) in favor of a more fluid, nontraditional identity.

Heterosexism: the system of oppression that reinforces the belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, thereby negating gays', lesbians', and bisexuals' lives and relationships.

Heterosexual: a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted or committed to members of the opposite sex.

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Heterosexual Privilege: The societal assumption and norm that all people are heterosexual. The basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives, that are systematically denied to gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons, simply because of their sexual orientation.

Hir: a non-gendered pronoun used by some transgender people. Hir (pronounced "here") corresponds to his, her, and him, and is used as a dative and possessive pronoun (see "Ze").

Homophobia: negative feelings, attitudes, actions or behaviors towards anyone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or perceived to identify as any of the above. Internalized homophobia is a fear of same-sex tendencies within oneself and can lead to repression. Institutionalized homophobia refers to homophobic laws, policies, and positions taken by social and governmental institutions.

Homosexuality: defines attraction to the same sex, and is one orientation on the continuum from homosexual to bisexual to heterosexual. Many prefer the terms "gay", "lesbian", or "bisexual" to describe their identities.

Lesbian: a woman whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to other women.

LGBT (also GLBT): the acronym for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender". The acronym may be expanded to a variation of LGBTIQA to include intersex, questioning, queer-identified people and/or allies. Can also be used as an adjective (i.e. – "I am an LGBT person.")

MTF: male-to-female. Indicates a transgender individual who was originally assigned the gender of male at birth, but has claimed a female identity through clothing, surgery, or attitude changes.

Queer: not heterosexual. Originally used with negative connotations, but is currently being reclaimed by many within the LGBT community.

Sex: An act, series of acts, that humans do as a part of the expression of their sexual nature and their desire for love and affection. Or the identification of biological gender.

Sexual Orientation: how one thinks of oneself in terms of to whom one is sexually or romantically attracted. Orientation is not dependent on physical experience, but rather on a person's feelings and attractions.

Transgender: used both as an umbrella term and as an identity. Broadly, it refers to those who do not identify or are uncomfortable with their assigned gender and gender roles. As an identity the term refers to anyone who transgresses traditional sex and gender categories.

Transsexual: people who feel that their gender identity is something other than their biological sex. Some transsexuals choose to use hormones and/or have an operation to change their physical anatomy to be congruent with their self-perception.

Ze: (pronounced "zee" or "see") corresponds to he and she, and is used as an accusative pronoun.

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