

Words Matter: Language and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community (adapted from the GLAAD Media Guide)

LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender; can be GLBT. Letters do not have to be in any particular order, but generally are LGBT or GLBT.

- **Gay:** The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, lesbian is often a preferred term for women. Avoid identifying gay people as "homosexuals."
- **Lesbian:** A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction is to other women. Avoid identifying lesbians as "homosexuals," a derogatory term.
- **Bisexual:** An individual who is physically, romantically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to men and women. Bisexuals need not have had equal sexual experience with both men and women; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.
- **Transgender:** A person whose identification as male or female differs from the assigned gender at birth.
 - MTF (Male-to-Female): a person assigned male at birth who transitions to or identifies as female; also FTM (Female-to-Male): a person assigned female at birth who transitions to or identifies as male.
 - An individual can be transgender without undergoing any hormone treatment or surgery. Some people choose one surgery; others choose multiple surgeries; some choose none. Issues of health and affordability factor in to an individual's decision.
 - Transgender also includes people who live full-time in their gender identity as well as people who express gender identity as performance art (such as drag queens and drag queens); genderqueer (someone who is more ambiguous in regards to their gender) and crossdresser (someone who occasionally dresses in the other sex's attire).
 - Individuals should be addressed based upon how they present. For example, if an individual presents as female, "she" and "her" may be appropriate pronouns. If one is unclear about a gender identity, respectfully ask the person how they would like to be addressed (as "he," "she," "they," or a gender-neutral pronoun such as "mixter.").

Intersex: People are usually assigned either male or female at birth, but some people are born with ambiguous genitalia. Intersex can be a variation of hormones and physical traits. The term once used was hermaphrodite and should be replaced with intersex.

Sexual Orientation: The scientifically accurate term for an individual's enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual orientations. All people have a sexual orientation.

Gender Identity: A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices (see non-binary and/or genderqueer below.) Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression: External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

- Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. For example, a man who becomes a woman and is attracted to other women would be identified as a lesbian.
- Avoid the offensive term "sexual preference," which is used to suggest that being gay or lesbian is a choice and therefore "curable."
- In most people, gender identity matches biological sex; when it doesn't, the umbrella term transgender is used.
- Transgender people may be heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual (as state above in other words, gender identity is different from sexual orientation).

Queer: Traditionally, queer has been used in a derogatory manner against LGBT persons and others; however, in more recent years, queer has become more acceptable and is used by some LGBT persons as a term of empowerment. The term is highly contextual – it may be perceived as fine in some contexts but derogatory in others. It is best to use only if the person self-identifies.

Questioning: A person who has questions about his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. You may see the acronym LGBTQ or GLBTQ, and the Q represents queer or questioning.

Ally: a person who does not identify as LGBTQ and who is supportive of LGBTQ equality.

HIV and AIDS: HIV is an abbreviation for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. AIDS is an abbreviation for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

- To have AIDS, a person must have HIV, their T-cell count must drop to 200 or below (a healthy person having between 500 and 1500 T-cells per cubic milliliter of blood), and/or get an opportunistic infection such as pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP), thrush, Kaposi's sarcoma, or toxoplasmosis.
- AIDS: an abbreviation for
 - acquired—infection through action (for example, through exchange of bodily fluids such as blood or semen);
 - immune deficiency—a weakness in the body's immune system that fights diseases;
 - syndrome—a group of health problems that make up a disease.

HIV is the underlying cause of AIDS, but not all HIV+ individuals have AIDS.

HIV can infect anybody. AIDS is not exclusive to LGBTQ people or any other group.

Terms to Avoid: These terms are generally perceived as negative by LGBT individuals.

- Sexual preference—it's not a preference; preference suggests that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice and therefore can and should be "cured."
- Homosexual—outdated clinical term; it has been adopted some to suggest that lesbians and gay men are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered — notions discredited by both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Gay and/or lesbian accurately describe people who are attracted to members of the same sex.
- Transvestite—derogatory, outdated term; NOT be used to describe someone who has transitioned to live full-time as the other sex, or who intends to do so in the future. Transvestite describes fetish behavior involving dressing in the clothing of a particular gender. It does not describe someone who chooses to live full-time as a particular gender.
- Hermaphrodite—outdated, stigmatizing and misleading word, usually used to sensationalize; use "intersex" instead.
- Lifestyle—owning an RV or supporting a sports team is a lifestyle, not being LGBTQ. There is no single lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender lifestyle.