



LGBTQ+ LANGUAGE GLOSSARY

Sharing insight and knowledge
around gender and sexual identity



backONTRACKteens
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE

Welcome

Back on Track Teens have created this LGBTQ+ glossary as a helpful resource for anyone who wants to learn more about and understand the language associated with LGBTQ+ identities.

This glossary is by no means an exhaustive list of terminology. Further resources are referenced at the bottom of the document for you to explore. Some terms within this glossary are not specifically LGBTQ+ related but add to the context of the conversations included in the wider Back on Track Teen mini-series.

The glossary

ASEXUAL

A person who experiences little to no sexual attraction and/or interest in sexual activity. Some asexual people experience romantic attraction, while others do not. Asexual people who experience romantic attraction might also identify as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer etc and use these terms in conjunction with asexual to describe the direction of their romantic attraction.

ALLY

A typically straight and/or cisgender person who supports the LGBTQ+ community. For example, an ally might choose to speak up if they heard someone using a homophobic slur (if it's safe for them to do so).

BINARY

The technical definition of binary relates to something having two parts. In decision making, a choice in which there are only

two alternatives is binary. In terms of LGBTQ+ identities, binary is often referred to in relation to the gender binary, which describes the classification of gender into two distinct, opposite forms of masculine and feminine, which is dictated by social system and/or cultural belief. Binaries can often be enforced through legislation, law, and societal pressure.

BISEXUAL/BI

Bi is an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender (that's where the "bi", meaning "two" comes in!). Bisexuality is a rich spectrum and people who are bi may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pan, queer, and some other non-monosexual and non-monoaromatic identities.

BIPHOBIA

The dislike of and discrimination against bisexual identities and any individual who identifies as bi. This includes systematic discrimination and biphobic abuse (physical, psychological or otherwise) targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.

CAMP

An adjective that is most often used to describe a man or male-presenting person who is perceived as being or acting effeminate or like a stereotypical caricature of a gay man. While it's a term that is most often used as a light-hearted descriptor, keep in mind that this term could be perceived as or levelled at someone as a homophobic slur.

CISGENDER/CIS OR CISMALE/CISFEMALE

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

COMING OUT/COME OUT

When a person first tells someone/others about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

DEADNAME/DEADNAMING

A deadname is often used to describe the name that a trans person received at

birth, sometimes called their birth name.

Deadnaming is the act of calling someone by their deadname (or birth name) after they have changed their name as part of their transition and/or in order to affirm their identity.

FEMINISM

Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of all the sexes.

FEMME

A term used in the context of LGBTQ+ culture to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically feminine way. 'Femme' is also used by people to define their gender identity; for example, someone who is a non-binary femme does not identify as a woman, but their gender experience may overlap or intersect with femininity. It's important to remember that you shouldn't assume that someone is comfortable being referred to using this term unless they tell you otherwise!

GAY

Traditionally, the term refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards other men. However, it's also a word used by women and non-binary people who are attracted to women to describe themselves. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

GENDER

Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is a social construct largely determined by culture. Gender is most often assumed based on the perceived biological sex that's assigned at birth. For example, if a baby is born with primary sexual characteristics that look like a vulva, they are determined to be biologically female and their gender is assigned; they are described as a girl and referred to with the pronouns "she/her".

GENDER BLIND

The experience of not discriminating or distinguishing between different genders.

GENDER DYSPHORIA

A term that describes when a person experiences discomfort, distress, or severe psychological harm because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who

doesn't feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.

GENDER FLUID

Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two binary genders of male and female. They might also (or instead) experience themselves as having more one gender some days. It's all totally down to the individual's perspective and experience.

GENDER IDENTITY

A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or a gender outside of that binary. This sense may or may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth.

GENDER AFFIRMATION THERAPY

Gender affirmation therapy refers to procedures that a trans person can choose to engage in order to support their transition. Some gender affirmation therapy involves medical intervention such as top or bottom surgery, or by taking hormones. Not every trans person feels the need to pursue this kind of gender affirmation therapy, and this decision does not make their gender identity any less valid.

The term also covers the more holistic elements of transitioning, such as the process of changing names and pronouns, and presenting (often through dress) in such a way that they feel affirmed in their gender.

HETEROROMANTIC (OR HETEROMANTIC)

Refers to a person who experiences romantic attraction towards a person of the opposite sex or gender, but does not experience sexual attraction. "Opposite" in this context means either male or female, which are the two genders that exist within the gender binary. See 'asexual' for more info.

HETEROSEXUAL

Refers to a person who experiences sexual attraction towards a person of the opposite sex or gender. "Opposite" in this context means either male or female, which are the two genders that exist within

the gender binary. In general, this term describes someone who experiences both romantic and sexual attraction to someone of the opposite sex, but technically it specifically relates to sexual attraction. See 'heteroromantic' for more info.

HETERONORMATIVITY/ HETERONORMATIVE SOCIETY

The assumption that everyone is heterosexual unless they specify otherwise. Heteronormativity contributes to the harmful perception that being heterosexual is “normal” or “neutral”, and any other sexual identity is a deviation from that. In some cases it can involve the incorrect view that heterosexuality or being heterosexual is superior or somehow preferable to any other sexuality.

We currently live in a heteronormative society, in which it is assumed that someone is heterosexual unless they state otherwise. Here's a scenario to illustrate: a lesbian woman has not yet disclosed her sexual orientation to her healthcare provider, but they are aware that she is married. When she is preparing to come in for surgery, the provider might ask “would you like your husband to accompany you to the ward?” In this instance, they have seen that a woman is married, and assumed that it is to a man.

This systematic prejudice is not necessarily as actively harmful as, say, a homophobic verbal assault, but it still has a very real, widespread and complex impact on people who identify as LGBTQ+.

HOMOSEXUAL

Refers to a person who experiences sexual

attraction towards a person of the same sex or gender. Keep in mind that this is often used in a scientific or medical context, and some people who are homosexual strongly prefer to be referred to as ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’, ‘queer’ or a similar, accurate term. This is because of the history around the word ‘homosexual’, in that it was often used as a term to other or single out LGBTQ+ people. As always, if you're unsure it's best to either check with someone how they prefer to be referred as or simply not assume or ask if it's not appropriate.

In general, this term describes someone who experiences both romantic and sexual attraction to someone of the same sex, but technically it specifically relates to sexual attraction. See ‘homoromantic’ for more info.

HOMOPHOBIA

The hatred/dislike of and discrimination against homosexual identities and any individual who experiences attraction to people of the same sex as them and/or identifies as homosexual (see 'homosexual' for more info). It's worth noting that while the word 'homophobia' is used to describe this type of prejudice, people who are subject to this prejudice are more likely to refer to themselves as gay, lesbian, queer, or otherwise (rather than 'homosexual').

This word tends to be used to describe the systematic discrimination and homophobic abuse (physical, psychological or otherwise) levelled at people who are, or who are perceived to experience sexual and/or romantic attraction to people of the same sex as them. This could range from a gay couple being subject to homophobic verbal abuse while walking in public, to the systematic implications of a heterosexual couple being able to marry but a homosexual couple not being able to until legislation changed in 2013.

However, it is sometimes used as a blanket term to describe discrimination, prejudice or harm toward any member of the LGBTQ+ community. For example, a young person might experience homophobic verbal abuse (based on the assumption that they are gay), while they are, in fact, pansexual.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The idea/acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of existing in relation to their identity. In terms of discrimination and oppression, intersectionality encourages you to consider everything and anything that can marginalise people that relates to their identity, including gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, etc.

Let's use this example to illustrate: two British women who identify as queer have some experiences in common, including feeling overjoyed in their queerness and experiencing prejudice because of their sexual identity. However, if one of those women happens to be Black and the other is white, then those two different identities affect their experience differently. The Black woman may experience prejudice because of her sexual identity and be subject to racist discrimination because she is Black, whereas the white woman will not experience negative effects because of her race.

Taking this further, a Black, queer woman experiences life differently to, say, a Black, heterosexual woman or a Black, queer man.

While intersectionality is rooted in the appreciation for the individual experience, it's best used as a lens to examine who in our society has more privilege and power than others so we can begin to question and tear down those unfair systems.

INTERSEX

Intersex is an umbrella identity that describes a person who is born with primary, secondary or other sexual characteristics which don't fit into the medical binary of "female" or "male." Being intersex is as natural and normal as someone whose sex is assigned male or female at birth. Many intersex people choose to share their identity, while others choose not to - it's all down to personal choice. Think of it this way, if you have a penis and were assigned male at birth, you're unlikely to think about telling your friends, family and partners that you do, in fact, have a penis and are biologically male!

Much like gender, biological sex is a spectrum and many people are born with bodies that overlap both the "male" and "female" sex profiles. Being intersex isn't necessarily something that can be deduced by the appearance of primary sexual characteristics (external indicators of sex, such as genitals). Some people who are intersex are born with vulva or a penis, but they may have secondary or other sex characteristics which correspond with the "opposite" sex they are assigned at birth. For example, a person may have a vulva and experience the same levels of testosterone in their body as someone assigned male. According to the strict binary of medical

classifications, that person is "both female and male", but in this case they may actually be intersex. This is why some people are intersex without even being aware of it themselves.

Some intersex people are born with genitalia that does not fit into the binary model of what male or female genitals are supposed to look like. Sometimes, doctors do surgeries on intersex babies and children to make their bodies fit binary ideas of "male" or "female" - in the case of young people who are still dependants, this is a violation of bodily consent because they aren't being allowed to make a decision about their body.

LESBIAN

Refers to a woman or non-binary person who experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction towards women.

LGBTQ+

An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and queer (although some people prefer to interpret the 'q' to mean 'questioning'). The '+' represents the many identities that are not included in the main body of the acronym, such as asexual, intersex, aromatic etc.

The acronym is often used as an umbrella term to describe any and all gender and sexual identities that exist outside of "traditional" binaries; namely heterosexuality and cisgender identities. You may have seen the acronym spelled as LGBT or LGBTQIA+ and it's typically understood to have the same sentiment. As a phrase, it's particular use is down to personal preference and much like any example of language, it's always evolving.

It's useful to know that some people use the term "the LGBTQ+ community" (we do, in fact, in this mini-series!). In this context, 'community' is being used as a collective term rather than in the sense that everyone within that group knows of or is aware of each other!

MISGENDER

To refer to someone, especially a transgender person, using a word that does not correctly reflect their gender identity. For example, referring to a trans man as

"she". This could be done on purpose or by accident, but misgendering someone (particularly a trans person) can be very harmful and contribute to feelings of gender dysphoria.

NON-BINARY

Sometimes referred to as 'genderqueer', non-binary is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity exists outside of the gender binary of male (man/boy) and female (woman/girl) genders. Some non-binary people use they/them pronouns whereas others may not. Some may use she/they or he/they. It's important to note that pronouns are not always indicative of gender identity and someone who uses she/her or he/him pronouns may still identify as non-binary.

Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who feel absolutely no affiliation with any gender or gender as a concept. Some may feel that because their gender not restricted to a binary, it is infinite and somewhat indefinable. A non-binary person might also identify with some aspects of the binary male and female genders; that doesn't make them any less non-binary!

ORIENTATION

Orientation is an umbrella term describing a person's attraction to other people. This attraction may be sexual (sexual orientation/attraction) and/or romantic (romantic orientation/attraction). These terms refer to a person's sense of identity based on their attractions, or lack thereof. Orientations include, but are not limited to, lesbian, gay, bi, ace and straight.

PANSEXUAL (PAN)

Refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not affected by or occurs as a consequence of sex or gender. When considering who they find attractive, a pansexual person does not or is unable to consider the person's sex or gender.

PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

A patriarchal society is a social, political and economic system that seeks to maintain a power imbalance where (almost exclusively cisgender) men are in positions of power. This could manifest as men being predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of assets, such as property. However, a patriarchal society also refers to male domination in public and private spaces, such as the domestic sphere.

It's important to note that the patriarchy is not placing the blame for this imbalanced society at the feet of every individual man. The patriarchy refers to the system as a whole that prioritises, protects, and uplifts men above any other gender identity; a system that harms almost all men as well.

PORN/PORNOGRAPHY

Printed or video/visual media containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity. Porn is defined by and created with the intention to stimulate sexual excitement, however, it's important to note that the term is also used to describe material that is produced without the knowledge and/or consent of the people(s) involved. For example, "revenge porn" is used to describe sexually explicit photos or videos of a person shared publicly, usually by an ex-partner, without the consent of the person photographed.

PUBERTY

The period during which adolescents begin to reach sexual maturity. Some young people may become capable of reproduction during this time, but not all.

PRONOUN

Words used to refer to people in the second person in conversation by way of their gender identity - for example he/him or she/her. Some people may use other pronouns such as they/them and ze/zir. Some people may use more than one set of pronouns, such as she/they.

Pronoun	Alternatives
He/Him	His/Himself
She/Her	Hers/Herself
They/Them	Theirs/Themselves
Ze (or Zie)/Zir	Xe
Using their name	

QUEER

Queer is an umbrella term used by some people to describe their gender and/or sexual identity. Much like LGBTQ+, it's a word that communicates to others that: a) the person could identify as any sexuality aside from heterosexual, b) the person's gender identity lies outside of the male-female gender binary, or c) an intersection of multiple identities. Some people might like to use the word 'queer' to describe themselves because it rejects the reliance on specific labels that define what exactly their sexual or gender identity is. For example, a non-binary lesbian might tell someone that they are 'queer' because they are not comfortable sharing specifics about their identity.

It's very important to note that the word queer is a reclaimed term, and it was once used exclusively as a slur. The word historically means "odd or strange". Just because it has been reclaimed does not mean that it is no longer used as a slur to harm and control people who identify as LGBTQ+. Because of this, some people prefer not to use it while others embrace it.

ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Attraction based on romantic desire, contact or interaction with another person or persons. This does not include nor consider sexual attraction, as wanting to be romantically involved with someone doesn't necessarily mean there's sexual attraction or any desire for sexual activity.

SEX

A biological assignation, given to a person based on primary sex characteristics (such as external genitalia) and reproductive functions. For example, a baby who is born with what appears to be a vulva is assigned female because medically, we associate the presence of a vulva as that person being biologically female.

It's important to note, though, that primary sex characteristics are not a definitive method of deducing biological sex. Intersex people, for example, often have a mix of

female and male primary and secondary sex characteristics. It's impossible to know exactly what someone's biological sex is without in-depth medical and scientific testing, and even everyone is born with a unique blend of sex characteristics. Therefore biological sex is more of a spectrum than a binary (male-female).

Sometimes the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are used interchangeably, however they are completely separate distinctions.

SEXUAL IDENTITY

An individual's innate, personal understanding of sense of who they are sexually and/or romantically attracted to in relation to the other person(s) gender.

SEXUAL ATTRACTION

Attraction based on sexual desire or interest in sexual activity with and/or in relation to other people.

SEXUALISING/SEXUALISATION

The process or action of making something sexual in character or quality or to attribute sex or a sex role to.

SPLIT ATTRACTION MODEL

A term to describe how romantic and sexual attraction are two distinct orientations (or modes of experiencing attraction), and explaining how they are different from

each other. See 'sexual attraction', 'romantic attraction', and 'asexuality' for more information.

STDS (SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE)

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), also known as sexually transmitted infections are bacterial, viral and trichomoniasis (parasitic) disorders or illnesses that are passed on through sexual activity.

TESTOSTERONE

A steroid hormone that stimulates development of male secondary sexual characteristics. The hormone is produced mainly in the testes, ovaries, and adrenal cortex.

THREESOME

A group of three people engaging in sexual activity.

TOKENISM

The practice of making an automatic or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from minority groups to give the appearance of equality within an environment. For example, if a business decides to hire an openly gay man to fulfill a "diversity quota".

TRANSFEMININE (ABBREVIATED TO TRANSFEM)

An umbrella term used to describe transgender people who, generally, are assigned male at birth and identify with a feminine gender identity, often to a greater extent than with a masculine gender identity.

Usually transfeminine people will choose to appear or express themselves as stereotypically feminine. This could be because it feels right to them or because they want to signal their dominant feminine identity to others in society.

As it's an umbrella term, transfem is used by a wide variety of individuals who do not identify as cisgender, from transgender women to non-binary or genderfluid people.

It's worth noting that transfem not the same as the word 'femme'. Femme is a feminine gender role which is sometimes used as a gender identity. It describes anyone in the LGBTQ+ community who is or feels feminine in nature.

Like any label, don't assume that a person identifies or uses this term to describe themselves unless they tell you otherwise.

TRANSGENDER/TRANS

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as or is beyond the binary of the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine, neutrois, and many more.

TRANSGENDER MAN (TRANS MAN)

A term used to describe someone who identifies as and is a man and was assigned female in terms of sex and gender at birth. This may be shortened to trans man. Some men who are trans identify as trans men, but not all. Others may simply identify as a man (who happens to have transitioned). Sometimes, trans men are referred to as, or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male, however this is not the preferred way to refer to a person who is trans as it still centres and "points out" the fact that they assigned a sex (and therefore, gender) at birth that is not who they are.

TRANSGENDER WOMAN (TRANS WOMAN)

A term used to describe someone who identifies as and is a woman and was assigned male in terms of sex and gender at birth. This may be shortened to trans woman or trans femme. Some women who are trans identify as trans women, but not all. Others may simply identify as a woman (who happens to have transitioned). Sometimes, trans women are referred to as MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female, however this is not the preferred way to refer to a person who is trans as it still centres and “points out” the fact that they assigned a sex (and therefore, gender) at birth that is not who they are.

TRANSMASCULINE (ABBREVIATED TO TRANSMASC)

An umbrella term used to describe transgender people who, generally, are assigned female at birth and identify with a masculine gender identity, often to a greater extent than with a feminine gender identity.

Usually transmasculine people will choose to appear or express themselves as stereotypically masculine. This could be because it feels right to them or because they want to signal their dominant masculine identity to others in society.

As it's an umbrella term, transmasc is used by a wide variety of individuals who do not

identify as cisgender, from transgender men to non-binary or genderfluid people.

It's worth noting that transmasc is not the same as the word 'masc'. Masc is a masculine gender role which is sometimes used as a gender identity. It describes anyone in the LGBTQ+ community who is or feels masculine in nature.

Like any label, don't assume that a person identifies or uses this term to describe themselves unless they tell you otherwise.

TRANSPHOBIA

The hatred/dislike of and discrimination against trans identities and any individual who identifies as trans. This word tends to be used to describe the systematic discrimination and transphobic abuse (physical, psychological or otherwise) levelled at people who are, or who are perceived to be trans. This could range from a trans man being subject to transphobic verbal abuse while walking in public, to the systematic erasure of trans human rights through transphobic legislation.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

A bias that is rooted in social stereotypes about certain groups of people. Unconscious bias is far more common than conscious prejudice and often goes against what the person conscious believes or feels.

While it's formed without the explicit knowledge of the individual with the unconscious bias, it can still cause a lot of harm. An example of unconscious bias might look like a cisgender person who does not engage in transphobic behaviours, but who feels uncomfortable if they run into a trans person in a gender-specific public toilet. The cisgender person in this scenario doesn't actively mean to be transphobic, they are behaving or responding to their unconscious

bias. However, the trans person may pick up on the cisgender person's discomfort (e.g. staring, doing a 'double-take', or hurrying away) and experience harm from the encounter.

The unconscious bias we may harbour could refer to bias against a certain group, characteristic or identity, or for another group. In the case of 'for', it's most likely to be a bias for an identity that is familiar and/or reflects our own. For example, a straight, cisgender man believing the word of another straight, cisgender man over a gay cisgender man because the first man is more like him.

Unconscious bias is not the individual's fault, but it is their responsibility to question, challenge and break down those biases.

FURTHER RESOURCES

This glossary has been created by combining dictionary definitions, Wikipedia extracts, the paid labour of a person who identifies as LGBTQ+ and some of the following resources. For more terms not expressed in this glossary, please refer to the following resources and carry out your own research.

- The [Stonewall glossary](#)
- The [National LGBT Health Education Center Glossary PDF](#)
- [Sexual Health D&G](#)
- [Gender Identity Research and Education Society](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign](#)



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Please feel free to share this glossary with friends, family members and colleagues who you think may benefit from or be interested in its content.

We also welcome you to subscribe to the Spark to Your Success podcast and explore the Back on Track Teens blog (and if you'd like to, perhaps share something you find there with your chosen communities).

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**This glossary was produced in 2021. As with any language, some terms may become outdated and/or cause offence or harm in the future. Back on Track Teens is an organisation dedicated to uplifting and learning from people in the LGBTQ+ community, so if you notice any terms that need adding or definitions that need changing, we invite you to let us know if you'd like to. Let's learn and be better together!*



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