

# LGBTQ Glossary of Terms

Terminology is fluid. What is considered helpful to reduce oppression evolves over time. Moreover, people within a group may prefer different terms and it is best to use terms by which individuals self-identify.

**Positive Space** – A welcoming and culturally inclusive environment that is free from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

**Safe Space** – Any area/place/building that does not tolerate LGBTQ discrimination or violence. A safe space is open and accepting of all LGBTQ persons.

**Ally** – A member of a dominant group who acts to intervene and end discrimination.

**Sex** – The medical classification of people as male, female or intersex, usually assigned at birth based on the appearance of a person's anatomy. Sex characteristics include chromosomes, hormones, secondary sex characteristics, and other aspects of the body.

**Gender Identity** – Each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere on the gender spectrum. This sense of self is separate from biological sex assigned at birth and is not related to sexual orientation. Since gender identity is internal, it is not necessarily visible to others.

**Gender Expression** – How a person publicly presents or expresses their gender including behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language, voice, chosen name and pronoun.

**Sexual Orientation** – Toward whom a person's sexual desires and drives are oriented – toward only women, or only men, or nobody, or irrespective of gender. It is separate and independent from a person's gender identity.

**Lesbian** – A woman who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to women.

**Gay** – A person whose primary attraction is to people of the same gender. The word can refer to men or women, although some women prefer "lesbian." Used as an umbrella term for the LBGT community.

**Bisexual** – A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to members of more than one gender, though not necessarily at the same time.

**Queer** – Formerly a derogatory slang term used to identify LGBT people. Some members of the LGBT community have reclaimed the word as a proud identifier when speaking among and about themselves.

**Questioning** – A period where a person explores their own sexual and/or gender identity, reflecting on such things as upbringing, expectations from others, and inner landscape.

**Trans\*** – "Across". An umbrella term used for people whose gender identity is not in harmony with their birth assignment, either wholly or partially, or who experience their gender identity as radically different from what is expected of a "man" or "woman." It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, trans woman, trans man, transsexual, cross-dresser, gender non-conforming, gender variant or gender queer. There are many communities that live under this umbrella and there is no single or universal experience of what it means to be trans.

**Trans Man** – A person who was assigned female at birth but has transitioned to identify and live as a man.

**Trans Woman** – A person who was assigned male at birth but has transitioned to identify and live as a woman.

**Intersex** – A person born with biological and/or physical characteristics that are not easily categorized by medical practitioners as male or female. Intersex people are often assigned as either male or female at birth. Some intersex people identify with their assigned sex, while others do not.

*lesbian gay  
transgendered  
bisexual queer*



**POSITIVE  
SPACE**

Example of a Positive Space sign. Many organizations and businesses will use symbols to let you know they are LGBTQ positive.

**Genderqueer/Gender Non-Conforming** – An identity in which people feel that the very substance of their gender lies outside the binary of “male” and “female.” They reject the gender expectations and stereotypes for their birth assigned sex. They may identify and express themselves as “feminine men” or “masculine women” or as androgynous, outside of the categories of “boy/man” or “girl/woman” They may or may not identify as trans, and may use gender neutral pronouns such as ze, hir, hirs, they and them.

**Transition** - A host of activities that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. This may include changes to their name, sex designation, dress, the use of specific pronouns, and possibly medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy, sex-reassignment surgery or other procedures. There is no checklist or average time for a transition process, and no universal goal or endpoint. Each person decides what will meet their needs.

**Two-Spirit:** a cultural and spiritual identity used by some First Nations peoples to describe having both masculine and feminine spirits. It can include people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex. For some, Two-Spirit describes a societal and spiritual role that people played within traditional societies, as mediators, keepers of certain ceremonies, transcending accepted roles of men and women, and filling a role as an established middle gender.

**Rainbow Flag** – The Rainbow Freedom Flag, designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker represents diversity in the LGBTQ community. It has been recognized by the International Flag Makers Association as the official flag of the LGBTQ civil rights movement.



**Coming Out** – A process of revealing more openly to self or others one’s LGBTQ identity.

**Homophobia** – Negative attitudes, feelings, or irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of gay, lesbian, or bisexual people and communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as “homosexual.” It is used to signify a hostile psychological state leading to discrimination, harassment or violence against gay, lesbian or bisexual people.

**Transphobia** – Negative attitudes and feelings and the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people, or those perceived to be trans.

**Cisgender** – “Same As” Used to describe people whose gender identity is in harmony with the sex assigned to them at birth. Cisnormativity refers to the assumption that all people are cisgender and that this is “the norm.” This prejudice against trans people is more systemic in society, organizations and institutions. It may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible.

**Cissexism** – A system of oppression that considers cis people to be superior to trans people. It includes harmful beliefs that it is “natural” to be cis and “aberrant” to be trans. Examples include scrutinizing the genders of trans people to more than those of cis people or defining beauty based on how cis people look.

**Cross-Dresser** – a person who, for various reasons, wears gender atypical clothing or occasionally dresses in clothing of the “opposite” gender. They may or may not self-identify as a cross dresser.

**Drag Queen or Drag King** – Someone who dresses in the clothing of the “opposite” gender for performance. Drag performers can be of any gender identity or sexual orientation.

**AMAB (MAAB)** – Refers to birth assignment, not one’s gender identity. Assigned Male at Birth refers to how babies are assigned as male, female or intersex based on anatomical characteristics.

**AFAB (FAAB)** – Refers to birth assignment, not one’s personal identity. Assigned Female at Birth refers to how babies are assigned as male, female or intersex based on anatomical characteristics.

**Heterosexism** – The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and preferable. The result is discrimination against bisexual, lesbian and gay people that is less overt, and which may be unintentional and unrecognized by the person or organization responsible for the discrimination.