

GLOSSARY OF QUEER Terms

Language is a living, breathing, growing entity, particularly within LGBTQIA+ communities. It is personal and ever evolving...work-in-progress. This glossary offers a starting point for understanding some key terms that reflect the community's identities, but it is by no means exhaustive or definitive.

These are general definitions, not universal. Identities and expressions are deeply individualized, and the way people use language can vary widely across cultures, generations, and personal experiences. What affirms one person may not affirm another. Language grows and shifts, reflecting new understandings, reclaimed histories, and the complexity of queer life.

Consider holding these definitions with an "open palm rather than a closed fist." Meaning, stay open to learning, unlearning, and honoring the ways people name their own truths.

We invite you to engage with these terms thoughtfully, ask questions, and listen to how LGBTQIA+ communities shape language for themselves.

TERM	GENERAL DEFINITION
Assigned Sex	What someone writes down as a baby's sex on a birth certificate, typically based on biology. Sex is typically assigned at birth as either male or female.
Binary identities	Those who identify within the gender binary of male and female
Bisexual	A person who experiences attraction to some people of their gender and another gender. Bisexual attraction does not have to be equally split or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders an individual may be attracted to.
Chosen family	Intentionally and consciously built networks of friends, partners, mentors, and allies who provide the emotional, social, and sometimes legal support that might be missing from biological families.
Chosen name	The name that an individual selects for themselves often to reflect their true gender identity or a name that resonates with their identity. Also called a preferred name.
Cisgender	Someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. Also shortened to "cis".
Dead name	A name given to a person at birth that is no longer used in any context and has been replaced completely by a chosen name. It is crucial to avoid using an individual's dead name unless completely necessary.
Gay	Experiencing attraction solely to members of the same gender. Can be used generally to refer to men who are attracted to other men and women who are attracted to women, etc.
Gender Binary	A cultural belief that there are only two distinct genders: man and woman.
Gender Expression	The many ways that a person might outwardly or socially express their gender.
Gender identity	A person's true sense of their own gender, independent of biology or any outward presentation. A person may use different words or terms to describe their gender identity over time.
Gender Nonconforming	An umbrella term to describe people who don't adhere to societal expectations of gender expression.
Given Name	A name given to a person at birth. Also called a birth name.
Intersex	A social label that is used as an umbrella term for differences in sex traits or reproductive anatomy.

TERM	GENERAL DEFINITION
Legal transition	The process of updating one's legal documents, such as identification, birth certificates, and government records, to reflect an affirmed gender identity. This may include changing gender markers, correcting names, and ensuring all official documentation aligns with one's affirmed identity
Lesbian	Women who are primarily attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women, or non-men attracted to other non-men.
Medical transition	The process of using medical interventions, such as hormone therapy (e.g., testosterone or estrogen), gender-affirming surgeries, or voice training, to align one's physical characteristics with their affirmed gender identity.
Nonbinary	An umbrella term for a range of gender identities outside of the binary framework of man or woman. It can also be used as a specific gender identity and can mean a person feels like a combination of man and woman, neither a man or woman, or something else entirely.
Pansexual	A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Some describe pansexuality as more dependent on the individual rather than their gender.
Personal Gender Pronouns	Pronouns that an individual would like others to use when talking to or about them without using their name.
Queer	A general term that can be used to describe someone who's gender or sexuality falls outside societal norms of straight or cisgender. Originally used as a slur against LGBTQ+ individuals, it has been reclaimed by many in the community as a positive, inclusive, and empowering term.
Safer space	A supportive, non-threatening environment that encourages open-mindedness, respect, willingness to learn from others, as well as physical and mental safety. It is a space that is critical of the power structures that affect our everyday lives. Everyone who enters a safer space has a responsibility to uphold the values of the space.
Sexual Orientation	An innate emotional, romantic, or physical attraction to others, whether to the same gender, different genders, multiple genders, or none. It is personal, involuntary, and can be fluid over time.
Sexual Identity	A personal understanding of one's own sexual orientation, attractions, and sense of self. It may involve labels (like gay, bisexual, or asexual) or none, reflecting how an individual defines their emotional, romantic, and physical connections to others. This self-perception can evolve over time.
Social transition	The process of publicly living as one's affirmed gender, which may include adopting a new name, using gender-affirming pronouns, changing appearance and grooming habits, and sharing one's gender identity with others in personal, social, or professional settings.
Transgender	An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. It is also used as an umbrella term to refer to the full range and diversity of identities within transgender communities because it is currently the most widely used and recognized term.
Transmasculine	Individuals who were assigned a different gender at birth and align more with masculinity in their gender identity and expression.
Transfeminine	Individuals who were assigned a different gender at birth and align more with femininity in their gender identity and expression.

NEED ADDITIONAL HELP WITH TERMS OR OTHER QUEER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND PRACTICES? HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS GLOSSARY?

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