

LGBTQ+ Terms To Use and Terms to Avoid

Words matter a great deal, and the words we use when talking about other people communicate a lot to them about what we think about them. While we may think we know the right or wrong terms to use, it is important to make sure we are using the right ones. You should always use the words a minority group wants you to use to describe them.

Sexual Orientation	
Term/Phrases to Avoid	Instead Say...
Homosexual, homosexual relationships, homosexual sex, etc. <i>This is a term often used to pathologize LGB populations</i>	Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Same-sex relationships, same-sex experiences or encounters
Gay marriage <i>This implies that extending marriage rights to LGB couples is a special thing when actually all it is in revising our laws to be more inclusive.</i>	Marriage equality
Homo, faggot/fag, fairy, a queer, fruits, lesbo, dyke, carpet muncher, etc. <i>These are pejorative terms which are most commonly used to put down or bully LGB youth.</i>	You shouldn't use pejoratives. However, if you want to refer to someone's sexual orientation, use phrases like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is gay • She is a lesbian • He or she is bisexual • He or she is queer (use only if the person identifies themselves to you as queer)
Sexual preference <i>This implies that sexual attraction is a choice rather than a biopsychological fact</i>	Sexual orientation
LGBTQ people do not deserve safe spaces or pride parades.	LGBTQ people are often marginalized and rejected by their families, friends, churches, and governments. This discrimination leads to high rates of mental illness and suicide. Until this trend reverses, it is imperative for them to have as much support as we can provide.
Being LGB is a choice.	There is no evidence to suggest that sexual orientation is a choice.
Being Gay or Lesbian is unnatural or abnormal.	Same-sex attraction is observable in over 1,500 animal species. Therefore it is normal. In human beings, it is a relatively rare phenomenon, therefore it is atypical, but not abnormal.
Bisexuality is a transition from straight to gay	Bisexuality is an observable sexual orientation. No one who identifies as Bisexual ceases to be bisexual, no matter what sex they are in a relationship with.
Asexuality is a sexual dysfunction or disorder	Asexuality is an observable sexual orientation. Unless the lack of sexual attraction or libido causes marked distress or impairment, it is not a dysfunction or a disorder.

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Gender Identity	
Term/Phrases to Avoid	Instead Say...
<p>Transsexual, hermaphrodite <i>Transsexual refers to individuals who have undergone medical transition. This can be non-inclusive to those who cannot afford to do so. Hermaphrodite is an outdated medical term.</i></p>	<p>Transgender individual, trans individual</p>
<p>Transgenders, transgendered, transgenderism <i>Transgender individuals are more than just transgender. To refer to them as transgenders identifies only one part of their identity. Transgendered is in the past tense, indicating that being transgender is something which happened rather than a life-long lived experience. Transgenderism is an outdated term.</i></p>	<p>Transgender individual, trans individual, transgender community</p>
<p>Tranny, shemale, he/she, it <i>These are pejorative terms which are most commonly used to put down or bully TQ youth.</i></p>	<p>You shouldn't use pejoratives. However, if you want to refer to someone's gender identity, use phrases like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He or she is transgender • They are transgender • He or she or they are queer (use only if the person identifies themselves to you as queer)
<p>Asking about transition-related milestones <i>Have you had the surgery?</i></p>	<p>A good rule of thumb. If you wouldn't ask a cisgender (non-transgender) person the question, you shouldn't ask it to a transgender person.</p>
<p>Using the wrong name or pronoun <i>But I've always known you this way...</i></p>	<p>You should use the name or pronouns the individual indicates you should use. To do otherwise is rude, offensive, and is a bullying behavior used to exert power over another.</p>
<p>Being transgender is a choice</p>	<p>Being transgender is not a choice, it is a normal part of human experience, a fact which has been affirmed by every major medical association in the western world. Moreover, there is plenty historical evidence of transgender individuals existing across time and culture.</p>
<p>Being transgender is a mental illness</p>	<p>Transgender people often suffer from gender dysphoria, a DSM-5 diagnosis. This occurs when a person feels a disconnect between their biological sex and social gender. The recommended treatment is hormone replacement and gender reassignment surgery. Not all transgender people are diagnosed with gender dysphoria, and being transgender does not, in and of itself, indicate mental illness.</p>