



# TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

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## INTRODUCTION

It is important to note that language around the LGBTQ community is constantly evolving. Acceptable terms change quickly and frequently. It is always a good idea to check information offered in one resource against other outside sources.

We at Point Foundation believe that every person deserves to be respected and affirmed in their identity. Below is a non-exhaustive list of terms, practices, and tips for engaging with members of the LGBTQ community. Please review this resource to better understand our scholars.

As a reminder, LGBTQ covers a broad spectrum of sexual and gender identities.

## TERMS

**Sexual orientation:** who one is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to.

**Gender expression:** external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with a particular gender.

**Gender identity:** one's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

In general, it is a best practice to not ask personal questions of people we have just met. This is particularly pertinent within the LGBTQ community. Please do not ask about details such as dating/sex life, surgeries, "real" or birth names.

## IMPORTANCE AND USAGE OF PRONOUNS

Pronouns are integral to who we are. We share pronouns because we want to avoid assuming someone's pronouns based on factors like their appearance. By sharing our own pronouns routinely, we encourage others to do the same and demonstrate that we

understand the importance of sharing pronouns. Using someone's correct pronouns is an important way of affirming someone's identity.

Common pronouns include she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. There are many additional pronouns used across genders, cultures, and other identities. It is important to ask people what their pronouns are. If you have questions, politely ask the person if they feel comfortable giving examples of how to use those pronouns.

How to ask: "What pronouns do you use?" or "What pronouns would you like me to use?"

How to share: "I'm Jade and my pronouns are they/them." or "My name is Alex and I use she/her and they/them pronouns."

### **What if I make a mistake and use the wrong pronouns?**

While we want to do our best to use someone's correct pronouns, mistakes can happen. If this does happen, it is best to say thank you for any correction, state what pronoun you meant to use, and move on without dwelling on the mistake. By saying thank you, we are aiming to empower the scholar while an apology focuses the situation on us and our mistake.

### **Why can't I just assume someone's pronouns by looking at them?**

By assuming someone's pronouns based on how they look, one is implicitly reinforcing harmful stereotypes about gender expression. For example, that masculine-looking people always use he/him/his pronouns. This is not always the case, and it is important to understand and respect each individual's identity. This is why we want to ask, not assume, someone's pronouns and make a habit of introducing ourselves with our pronouns.

<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/ally-tips>

## **TERMS RELATED TO GENDER, GENDER IDENTITY, OR GENDER EXPRESSION**

- **Agender:** Not identifying with any gender, the feeling of having no gender.
- **Androgyne:** A person whose biological sex is not readily apparent or who is intermediate between or rejects entirely binary gender roles.
- **Bi-gender:** To identify as both genders and/or to tend to move between masculine and feminine gender-typed behavior depending on context; expressing a distinctly male persona and a distinctly female persona; two separate genders in one body.

- **Cisgender:** a person whose gender identity is aligned to what they were designated at birth, based on their physical sex; a non-trans\* person.
- **Drag king:** A person who dresses in masculine or gender marked clothing, makeup, and mannerisms for the purpose of performance. Many drag kings perform by singing, dancing, or lip-syncing.
- **Drag queen:** A person who dresses in feminine or gender marked clothing, makeup, and mannerisms for the purpose of performance. Many drag queens perform by singing, dancing, or lip-syncing. (not indicative of sexual/gender identity)
- **FTM:** A person who transitions from female-to-male, meaning a person who was assigned female at birth, but identifies and lives as a male.
- **Gender-affirming surgery:** Surgical procedures that alter or change physical sex characteristics to better express a person's inner gender identity. May include removal of the breasts, augmentation of the chest, or alteration or reconstruction of genitals. Also called gender confirming surgery or sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Preferred term to sex-change surgery.
- **Gender dysphoria:** Emotional or mental dissonance between one's desired concept of their body and what their body is biologically, especially in references to body parts/features that do not align with one's gender identity.
- **Gender non-conforming:** Gender expression or identity outside or beyond a specific culture or society's gender expectations; a term used to refer to individuals or communities who may not identify as transgender, but who do not conform to traditional gender norms. May be used in tandem with other identities.
- **Genderqueer:** Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as genderqueer may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside of these categories.
- **Intersex:** People who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes and/or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either the "standard" male or female sex.
- **MTF:** A person who transitions from male-to-female, meaning a person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies and lives as a female.
- **Non-binary:** A gender identity and experience that embraces a full spectrum of expressions and ways of being that resonate for an individual. It may be an active resistance to binary gender expectations and/or an intentional creation of new unbounded ideas of self within the world.
- **Passing:** A term used by transgender people to mean that they are seen as the gender with which they self-identify. For example, a transgender man (born female) whom most people see as a man.

- **Queer:** An umbrella term representative of the vast matrix of identities outside of the gender normative and heterosexual or monogamous majority. Reclaimed after a history of pejorative use, though still considered an offensive term by some members of the LGBTQ community.
- **Stealth:** Describes the process of a trans person interacting with others without disclosing their trans identity or status; purposefully not disclosing trans identity or status to aid in identity empowerment, promote privacy or increase personal safety.
- **Transgender:** An umbrella term describing a diverse community of people whose gender identity differs from that which they were assigned at birth; expressions and identities that challenge the male/female gender system in a given culture; anyone who transcends the conventional definitions of man and woman and whose self-identification or expression challenges traditional notions of male and female.
- **Transgender man:** A transgender individual who identifies as a man.
- **Transgender woman:** A transgender individual who identifies as a woman
- **Transition:** The coming out process of a trans person; may be continual or deemed to be a set period of time or series of events; to physically change one's appearance, body, self describing language, and/or behaviors in accordance with their gender identity. May be broken down in parts; social transition (e.g., language, clothing, behavior, legal documents) and physical transition (medical care such as hormones, and/or surgery).
- **Two Spirit:** Native American term to describe people who embody attributes of both masculine and feminine genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with rituals. Their dress is usually a mixture of male and female articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender.

## TERMS RELATED TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION, SEXUALITY, OR PARTNER PREFERENCE

- **Ace:** A sexual orientation label referencing asexuality; sometimes called the Ace Umbrella to represent the wide spectrum of sexual identities and experiences.
- **Aromantic:** People who experience little to no romantic attraction and are content with close friendships and other non-romantic relationships.
- **Asexual:** A sexual orientation where a person does not experience sexual attraction or desire to partner for the purpose of sexual stimulation
- **Bisexual:** A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to those of the same gender or those of another gender. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

- **Demisexual:** People who only experience sexual attraction once they form a strong emotional connection with another person.
- **Gay:** Term used to describe people who are emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted to other people of the same gender. In the past, “gay” specifically referred to male-identified persons who are attracted to male-identified persons. Now it is common for gay to be used by anyone who is attracted to another person of the same gender.
- **Grey-A:** People who identify somewhere between sexual and asexual.
- **Lesbian:** Term used to describe female-identified persons attracted emotionally, physically, and/or sexually. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay or as gay women.
- **MSM:** An abbreviation for men who have sex with men; they may or may not identify as gay.
- **Pansexual:** A person who has potential emotional, physical, and/or sexual attraction to any sex, gender identity or gender expression. This sexual orientation is associate with desiring/loving a person’s personality primarily, and specific body party secondarily.
- **Queer:** An umbrella term representative of the vast matrix of identities outside of the gender normative and heterosexual or monogamous majority. Reclaimed after a history of pejorative use, though still considered an offensive term by some members of the LGBTQ community.
- **Queerplatonic:** People who experience a type of non-romantic relationship where there is an intense emotional connection that goes beyond a traditional friendship. There are no gender, sexuality or romantic orientation requirements within the definition of queerplatonic.
- **Same-gender loving (SGL):** A term sometimes used by members of the African American community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols often used in the predominately white LGBTQ movement. The term was first used in the early 1990’s with the intention of offering Black women who love women and Black men who love men a voice, a way of identifying and being that resonated with the uniqueness of Black culture and life.
- **Sexual orientation:** An individual’s physical and/or emotional attraction to and desire to sexually or emotionally partner with specific genders and/or sexes (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual).
- **Straight:** Another term for heterosexual. (we do have straight scholars)