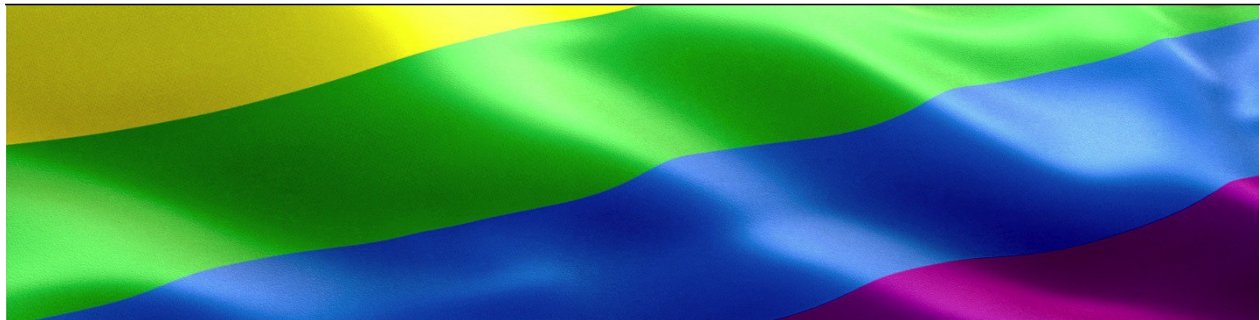




# LGBTQIA Resource Guide



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# Understanding Sexual Orientation, Gender, and Gender Identity

## What is LGBTQIA?

### **Lesbian**

A female-identified person who is attracted romantically, physically, or emotionally to another female-identified person.

### **Gay**

A male-identified person who is attracted romantically, physically, or emotionally to another male-identified person.

### **Bisexual**

Individuals who are attracted to both men and women romantically, physically, or emotionally.

### **Transgender**

Individuals whose biological sex is different than the gender with which they identify. Sometimes the term "born in the wrong body" is used, however this depends on the individual's preference.

### **Transsexual**

Transsexual individuals have physically altered their body in order to better match their gender identity. It is a term that refers to biology, not to identity necessarily, and it is indicative of a change in one's physiology.

### **Queer**

Queer is an all-inclusive term referencing lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transpeople, and intersex persons.

\*It was previously a derogatory term in the 1980s, however, it has currently been reclaimed when referring to the LGBTQIA community. Queer attempts to reject the idea that the labels of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender are able to explain any one person's identity.

### **Intersex**

Someone whose physical sex characteristics are not categorized as exclusively male or exclusively female.

### **Asexual**

A person who is not attracted to anyone or does not have sexual orientation.

### **Ally**

A person who does not identify as LGBTQIA but supports the rights and safety of those who do.

("The Story," 2013)

## **Intersectionality in the LGBTQIA Community**

The LGBTQIA Community includes individuals from every race, religion, ability, age, socio-economic class, nationality, and culture. It is important to acknowledge the contributions of all members of the LGBTQIA community and to view individuals as complex with multiple identities and experiences.

## **Some Gender Basics**

### **Gender & Sex**

One of the most prevalent misconceptions about gender is that it is based solely on a physical understanding of sex, and that everyone fits into one of two opposite categories, male or female. This misconception in turn, leads many to incorrectly assume that the body one is born with determines an individual's gender. Though related to one another, both gender and sex are much more complex. Gender is comprised of a person's physical and genetic traits, their own sense of gender identity and their gender expression. Given the numerous combinations that these factors can create, gender is better understood as a spectrum.

While many people fall into strongly masculine or feminine categories, others fall somewhere in the middle and are more androgynous. Ultimately, each person is in the best position to define their own place on the gender spectrum.

### **Gender Identity vs. Sexual Orientation**

Despite the tendency to conflate sexual orientation and gender identity, the two are very different. Sexual orientation describes a person's sexual or romantic attraction, while gender identity refers to someone's own personal sense of being male, female, both or neither. Everyone has both a gender identity and a sexual orientation. (Orr, Brown, Gill, Kahn, & Salem, 2015, pp. 5-7)

### **What is Sexual Orientation?**

"Sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction to another person. It can be distinguished from other aspects of sexuality including biological sex, gender identity (the psychological sense of being male or female) and the social gender role (adherence to cultural norms for feminine and masculine behavior).

Sexual orientation exists along a continuum that ranges from exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality and includes various forms of bisexuality. Bisexual persons can experience sexual, emotional and affectional attraction to both their own sex and the opposite sex. Persons with a homosexual orientation are sometimes referred to as gay (both men and women) or as lesbian (women only).

Sexual orientation is different from sexual behavior because it refers to feelings and self-concept. Persons may or may not express their sexual orientation in their behaviors. The word homosexual is usually avoided because of its negative connotations relating to the way it has been used in the past.

Sexual orientation is a relatively recent notion in human rights law and practice and one of the controversial ones in politics. Prejudices, negative stereotypes and discrimination are deeply imbedded in our value system and patterns of behaviour. For many public officials and opinion-makers the expression of homophobic prejudice remains both legitimate and respectable - in a manner that would be unacceptable for any other minority.

The main principles guiding the rights approach on sexual orientation relate to equality and non-discrimination. Human rights advocates, lawyers and other activists seek to ensure social justice and guarantee the dignity of lesbians, gays and bisexuals." ("Study Guide," 2003)

## Coming Out

“Coming out is when a person accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and shares it with others. It may be a lifelong process. An individual may be “out” to important people in their life, but may continually “come out” to new people such as medical providers, new friends and co-workers.

What might people who are a member of the LGBTQ population be afraid of when coming out?

- Rejection: loss of relationships with friends and/or family
- Gossip: rumors spread about their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Loss of spiritual foundation: rejection from their church, mosque, temple, etc.
- Being thrown out of the house or of the family
- Loss of financial support
- Harassment or abuse
- Threat of physical violence
- Discrimination
- Loss of employment or discrimination by their employer
- Questions surrounding their personal or professional integrity
- Questions surrounding their intimate relationships and their health (both mental and physical)
- Being seen by others as sick, immoral, perverted, anti-family, or sinful”

("Coming out," n.d.)

It is important to note that not all individuals are comfortable with coming out and may not wish to discuss their private lives and this should be respected. Or individuals might have different levels of being out only confined to close friends and/or family.

## Definitions

### Gender

Complex relationship between physical traits and one’s internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither (gender identity), as well as one’s outward presentation and behaviors (gender expression).

### Sex

In the United States, individuals are assigned “female” or “male” sex at birth, based on physical attributes and characteristics. This assumed physical dichotomy of sex is itself belied by a variety of naturally occurring conditions. Sex in some contexts, such as the law, is also used as an umbrella term that encompasses gender and gender identity. For the purposes of the discussion in this guide, however, “sex” is being used to convey those physical attributes and characteristics that are used to assign someone as “male” or “female” at birth.

### Gender Binary

A social system that constructs gender according to two discrete and opposite categories — male or female.

### Cisgender

A term for people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender-expansive**

Refers to a wider, more flexible range of gender identities or expressions than those typically associated with the binary gender system.

**Transgender**

Describes a person whose gender identity is different from what is generally considered typical for their sex assigned at birth. Note: This term is an adjective. Using this term as a verb (i.e., transgendered) or noun (i.e., transgenders) is offensive and should be avoided.

**Gender Nonconforming**

Describes a person whose behaviors or gender expression falls outside what is generally considered typical for their assigned sex at birth.

**Gender Spectrum**

An understanding of gender as encompassing a wide range of identities and expressions.

**Gender Expression**

How a person expresses their gender through outward presentation and behavior. This includes, for example, a person's name, clothing, hair style, body language and mannerisms.

**Gender Identity**

A personal, deeply-felt sense of being male, female, both or neither. Everyone has a gender identity.

**Gender Dysphoria**

An intense and persistent discomfort with the primary and secondary sex characteristics of one's assigned birth sex. Affirming and supporting a person's gender identity can help to significantly decrease their dysphoria. Conversely, rejecting or requiring a person to conceal their gender identity will exacerbate their level of dysphoria.

**Sexual Orientation**

Term that describes a person's romantic or sexual attraction to people of a specific gender or genders. "Lesbian," "gay," "bisexual" and "straight" are examples of sexual orientations. Our sexual orientation and our gender identity are separate, distinct parts of our overall identities.

**Transition**

The process through which transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. Social transition may include things such as changing names, pronouns, hairstyle and clothing. Medical transition may include medical components like hormone therapy and gender affirming surgeries. Not all transgender individuals seek medical care as part of their transition or have access to such care. The decision about which steps to take as part of one's transition is a deeply personal and private choice. You should never ask someone if they have had any medical procedures, and you should respect the privacy of a student's transition process.

**Transphobia**

Irrational fear or hatred of, or violence, harassment or discrimination perpetrated against transgender people.

(Orr, Brown, Gill, Kahn, & Salem, 2015, pp. 5-7)

## Using Gender-Neutral Language in Academic Writing

Many people identify outside the sex and gender binary of male/female and man/woman. Many transgender, intersex, and genderqueer folks are not comfortable being addressed with the traditional masculine and feminine pronouns "he" and "she." Gender-neutral or non-sexed language includes pronouns that do not indicate one's gender, allowing us to address people without making gender assumptions, and allowing a safer, more inclusive learning environment. By using non-sexed language we can avoid assuming people's genders and respect the identity of our transgender, intersex, and genderqueer community members. Gender-neutral language can be used in any writing where the gender of a person is unknown or unimportant.

### Options for Gender-Neutral Language

#### 1. Singular "They"

A common approach to avoiding gender specific language is the use of singular "they." However, this technique is more commonly used in spoken English than in written English. Because singular "they" does not prescribe to the rule of number agreement between pronouns and their antecedents, it is not accepted in Standard English and poses the possibility of confusing readers, which can distract from the message that the writer is trying to present. Despite this concern, many people find this technique to be more simple than learning a different pronominal system. In March 2017, the Associated Press added the use of singular "they" to the AP Stylebook, though it gives preference to reworking sentences as described in option three below (Easton, 2017).

Example using non-sexist language:

An RA is responsible for establishing a safe, welcoming living environment for his or her residents.

Example using gender-neutral singular "they":

An RA is responsible for establishing a safe, welcoming living environment for their residents.

In the above examples, while non-sexist language works solely within the gender binary of male/female, the usage of singular "they" acknowledges those who identify entirely outside of this dichotomy or somewhere along the gender spectrum. However, while the non-sexist sentence is considered grammatically correct, the sentence using gender-neutral language is not.

#### 2. Gender-Neutral Pronouns

Another technique to avoid gender-specific language is the use of gender-neutral pronouns, also called genderqueer pronouns. These pronouns have been established within transgender, genderqueer, and intersex communities. While they are not widely used in mainstream English, gender-neutral pronouns are well known and accepted within these communities. Many gender-neutral pronouns have been created. While there is no consensus on a standard of gender-neutral pronouns, "ze" is the most common subject pronoun, and "hir" and "zir" are the most commonly used pronouns for objective and possessive cases.

See additional information and examples of using gender-neutral pronouns in the Pronoun Guide on page 8.

#### 3. Rewriting Sentences to Be Both Grammatically Correct and Gender-Neutral

Group words to use a plural pronoun properly:

It is my belief that people must have their basic needs met before they can put energy into environmental issues.

Use the passive verb form:

It is my belief that a person's basic needs must be met before energy is put into environmental issues.

Use "one" instead of "he or she":

It is my belief that one must have one's basic needs met before putting energy into environmental issues.

In academic settings, it is also common to substitute the role of the person in question, such as student, faculty member, or staff member.

## **Tips for Promoting and Using Gender-Neutral Language**

The concept of gender-neutral language is fairly new and has become popular only in certain fields of academia. There are many within our community, students, staff, and faculty included, who are unfamiliar with this language. For transgender and genderqueer students, staff, and faculty, the issue of preferred language usage in spoken and written form is not simply one of grammatical correctness but one of identity. Here are tips for those of us at MUIH who want to be respectful and inclusive in an academic environment, and some ways to learn more and start dialogues:

- Attend events during Pride Month that celebrate and provide information about transgender and genderqueer people.
- When using gender-neutral language in your academic papers, be consistent. If you start using gender-neutral language, do it throughout your entire paper.
- Create a space in your classroom for students to name their identities. For example, instead of doing a roll call the first day of class, which often doesn't include students' preferred names, pass an attendance sheet around in which students can write their preferred names and gender pronouns.
- Respect the identities of students, staff, and faculty by using their preferred names and gender pronouns. MUIH provides an option for students to provide a preferred name when applying to the university, and at any time through the Office of the Registrar. This preferred name is used when creating student email accounts and in the Canvas online learning environment, and should be used by all faculty and staff when possible. Official transcripts and other University documents will include students' legal names.
- Gender identities may change over time. Be open to changes in individuals' preferred gender pronouns.
- You may slip up and use the wrong gender pronoun. That is okay. However, don't pretend you didn't use the incorrect pronoun. Correct yourself and continue your conversation. The student, faculty member, or staff member you are speaking with will appreciate your effort.

These writing guidelines and tips were adapted from Using Gender-Neutral Language in Academic Writing, Warren Wilson College Writing Center, [http://www.warren-wilson.edu/content/uploads/2015/07/Gender-Neutral\\_Language.pdf](http://www.warren-wilson.edu/content/uploads/2015/07/Gender-Neutral_Language.pdf)

Easton, L. March 24, 2017. Making a case for singular 'they'. The Definitive Source: Associated Press Blog. <https://blog.ap.org/products-and-services/making-a-case-for-a-singular-they>

## Pronoun Guide

Some people don't feel like traditional gender pronouns (she/her, he/him) fit their gender identities. Transgender, genderqueer, and other gender-variant people may choose different pronouns for themselves. The following guide is a starting point for using pronouns respectfully.

### How do I know which pronouns to use?

If the person you're referring to is a stranger or brief acquaintance (like a server, cashier, fellow bus patron, etc), you may not need to know. If the person is a classmate, student, or coworker, for example, it is best to ask. Try:

"What pronouns do you use?"

"How would you like me to refer to you?"

"How would you like to be addressed?"

"My name is Tou and my pronouns are he and him. What about you?"

### How often do pronouns change?

Remember that people may change their pronouns without changing their name, appearance, or gender identity. Try making pronouns an optional part of introductions or check-ins at meetings or in class.

### What if I make a mistake?

Most people appreciate a quick apology and correction at the time of the mistake. Try: "Her books are—I'm sorry, hir books are over there."

By correcting yourself, you're modeling respectful pronoun use for others in the conversation.

If you only realize the mistake later, a brief apology can help. Try: "I'm sorry I used the wrong pronoun earlier. I'll be more careful next time."

### When should I correct others?

Some people may not want a lot of public attention to their pronouns, while others will appreciate you standing up for them. If someone uses the wrong pronoun for a person who isn't present, try a brief correction: "I think Sam uses she and her pronouns. And yes, I'm going to her house later too!"

It can be tough to remember pronouns at first. The best solution is to practice! Correct pronoun use is an easy step toward showing respect for people of every gender.

	<b>Nominative (subject)</b>	<b>Objective (object)</b>	<b>Possessive determiner</b>	<b>Possessive pronoun</b>	<b>Reflexive</b>
<b>He / Him</b>	He laughed	I called him	His eyes gleam	That is his	He likes himself
<b>She / Her</b>	She laughed	I called her	Her eyes gleam	That is hers	She likes herself
<b>They / Them</b>	They laughed	I called them	Their eyes gleam	That is them	They like themselves
<b>Ze (zie) / Hir</b>	Ze laughed	I called hir	Hir eyes gleam	That is hirs	Ze likes hirself
<b>Spivak</b>	Ey laughed	I called em	Eir eyes gleam	That is eirs	Ey likes emself

Pronoun Guide adapted from the LGBT Campus Center's Gender Pronouns Guide at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, <https://students.wisc.edu/lgbt/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2016/07/LGBTCC-Gender-pronoun-guide.pdf>



## How to Be an Ally

Check out the Human Rights Campaigns Guide on being and LGBTQ Supporter:

<http://www.hrc.org/resources/straight-guide-to-lgbt-americans>

1. **Be honest:** It's important to be honest with yourself — acknowledging your feelings and coming to terms with them. And it means being honest with the person who came out in your life — acknowledging you aren't an expert, asking them what's important to them, seeking resources to better understand the realities of being an LGBT individual so that you can be truly informed and supportive.
2. **Send gentle signals:** Showing and sharing your acceptance and support can be very easy. Many people often don't realize that LGBT people keep watch for signs from their friends, family and acquaintances about whether it is safe to be open with them. It can be as subtle as having an LGBT-themed book on your coffee table.
3. **Have courage:** Just as it takes courage for LGBT people to be open and honest about who they are, it also takes courage to support your LGBT friends or loved ones. We live in a society where prejudice still exists and where discrimination is still far too common. Recognizing these facts and giving your support to that person will take your relationship to a higher level and is a small step toward a better and more accepting world.
4. **Be reassuring:** Explain to someone who came out to you that their sexual orientation or gender identity has not changed how you feel about them, but it might take a little while for you to digest what they have told you. You still care for and respect them as much as you ever have or more. And that you want to do right by them and that you welcome them telling you if anything you say or do is upsetting.
5. **Let your support inform your decisions:** It's about working to develop a true understanding of what it means to be LGBT in America and trying to do your part to help break down the walls of prejudice and discrimination that still exist — for example, by supporting businesses with appropriate anti-discrimination policies, saying you don't appreciate "humor" that demeans LGBT people when it happens or learning about where political candidates stand on issues that have an impact on the LGBT community.

("Coming out as a Supporter," 2014)

## Events

Pride events happen throughout the country, traditionally in the month of June, however events often occur throughout the spring and summer.

**Washington, DC:** <http://www.capitalpride.org/>

**Baltimore, MD:** <http://baltimorepride.org/>

**By City throughout the USA:** <http://www.gaypridecalendar.com/byname>

## Videos & Podcasts

Ted Talks on LGBT Issues:

<https://www.ted.com/topics/lgbt>

#MyStoryOutLoud: Digital Storytelling for LGBTQ Youth of Color:

<http://yth.org/mystoryoutloud-digital-storytelling-lgbtq-youth-color/>

Podcast Picks for Pride Month:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/entertainthis/2017/05/29/podcast-pride-month-lgbtq-asia-kate-dillon/102151736/>

## Organizations

### [Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation](#) (GLAAD)

GLAAD aims to give LGBTQ issues more presence in the media and also aims to provide forums through which LGBTQ-identified people can share their stories.

### [Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network](#) (GLSEN)

GLSEN “want[s] every student, in every school, to be valued and treated with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation” and works in and with schools across the country to ensure education equality.

### [Human Rights Campaign](#)

A major LGBTQ activist group that aims to educate the public about LGBTQ issues and rights.

### [Lambda Legal](#)

A resource for LGBTQ individuals seeking legal counsel, legal assistance, or information about civil rights as an LGBTQ-identified person.

### [National Center for Transgender Equality](#)

NCTE provides information, resources, and current news about transgender issues and transgender advocacy work.

### [National LGBTQ Taskforce](#)

An organization that works to build the strength of LGBTQ communities throughout the United States through training citizens and activists’ about LGBTQ issues and helping to support and promote pro-LGBTQ legislation.

### [Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays](#) (PFLAG)

The main site for America’s largest family/ally organization that provides resources for both LGBTQ-identified people and allies in regards to support, education, and advocacy work.

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