



# A Word on Language

Gender and Sex Diversity Resource



# Setting the Scene – common terms

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Below is an introduction to some key terms.

*Some key points to keep in mind:*

- *labels are tricky. Some people embrace them, others hate to be 'boxed'.*
- *many of these terms have been simplified; have contested meanings; or may be offensive when used by someone who does not identify with the concept but positive when used by someone who does.*
- *Tip: when a person uses a term to describe themselves, trust that definition over your pre-conception or a dictionary definition.*

Sex – categorisation based on biological factors. Examples: female, male, intersex.

Gender – categorisation based on societal and cultural factors. At birth, many people are assigned a gender based on their perceived sex. Examples: feminine, masculine, androgynous.

- Gender identity – a person's internal conception of their gender.
- Gender expression – the way that a person externalises/performs their gender.

Orientation - the way a person experiences sexual and/or romantic attraction. (more on this on page 4).

Intersex – people born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that do not conform with stereotypical notions of male or female and are instead neither wholly female nor wholly male, or a combination of female and male. Intersex people have a broad range of gender identities and orientations.

Transgender – a person who does not identify exclusively with the gender they were assigned at birth. (NB: some people identify as transexual; however for most this is an outdated term.)



# Setting the Scene – common terms cont.

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Non-binary/genderqueer – a person who does not identify as exclusively male or female.

Cisgender (pronounced siss-gender) – a person who exclusively identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth. Examples: cis-male, cis-female.

Gender dysphoria - intense discomfort or distress around gendered physical characteristics (e.g. body parts, clothing) or words (e.g. pronouns, names) not reflecting a person's preferences. Note that not everyone who identifies as transgender/gender diverse experiences dysphoria.

Pronouns/Preferred gender pronouns/PGPs – words used instead of a person's name. Examples: she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs, ze/hir (zee/here).

Transitioning/affirming – the process of a trans person making changes to better align their gender expression with their gender identity. This may, but need not, include things such as using a different name or pronouns, dressing differently, undergoing surgery or utilising hormone replacement therapy.

FtM/F2M; MtF/M2F – female-to-male or male-to-female transgender person.

LGBTIQ/LGBTIQA/LGBTIQA+/QUILTBAG/Queer/Gay

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual/ally

# Setting the Scene - common terms cont.



Orientation – the way a person experiences sexual and/or romantic attraction.

aromantic/ace – a person who experiences little or no romantic attraction.

asexual/ace – a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction.

bisexual/bi – a person who is attracted to both people of their own gender and people of the opposite gender.

demiromantic/demi - a person who experiences romantic attraction towards people only once they become strongly emotionally connected.

demisexual/demi – a person who experiences sexual attraction towards people only once they become strongly emotionally connected.

gay – a person who is attracted to people of their own gender. This is not limited to men, but is typically used in that context.

lesbian – a woman who is attracted to women.

MSM/WSM – men who have sex with men/women who have sex with women. This is often used to distinguish sexual behaviours from sexual identities.

pansexual – a person who may be attracted to people of all genders.

Polyamorous/poly – a person who has intimate relationships with multiple people.

Skoliosexual – a person who is attracted to transsexual/genderqueer people.



# Pronouns

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A person's name or physical appearance cannot tell you their gender identity. Making assumptions can lead to misgendering - using incorrect pronouns to refer to a person - thereby failing to validate and respect that person's identity.

You can ask someone what their preferred pronouns are. For example:

Hi, I'm Anya and I use she/her/hers. What about you?

What pronouns do you use?

What pronouns do you use in this space?

It is important to note that people's pronouns may change from day to day or space to space. For example, someone may use she/her/hers when attending an LGBTIQ event, but use he/him/his in other spaces. It is important to be aware of these distinctions to avoid outing anyone.

## Practice!

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Don't know how to pronounce someone's pronouns? Unsure how to use them in a sentence? Or just want to make sure you get into a new habit? You can find lots of resources online, including this interactive piece from Minus18 - <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resource-packs/pronouns>

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## Making Mistakes

You're probably going to make a mistake, and that's OK. When you do, acknowledge the mistake, use the correct pronoun and carry on. Don't make a big deal of the mistake, explain how sorry you are or the efforts you'll make to ensure it doesn't happen in the future – this will likely make the person feel uncomfortable and feel responsible for comforting you.

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# More resources

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- Organisation Intersex Australia (OII)

- “OII Australia is an independent support, education and policy development organisation, by and for people with intersex variations or traits. Our work focuses on human rights, bodily autonomy and self-determination, and on evidence-based, patient-directed healthcare.”
- <https://oii.org.au/>

- The Gender Centre

- Aim: “To provide a high quality service to the transgender and gender diverse community of N.S.W., which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect, dignity and confidentiality for all.”
- <https://gendercentre.org.au/>

- Pride in Diversity

- “Pride in Diversity is Australia’s first and only national not-for-profit employer support program for all aspects of LGBTI workplace inclusion. A social inclusion initiative of ACON, Pride in Diversity are specialists in HR, organisational change and workplace diversity dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of LGBTI people by reducing exclusion, invisibility, homophobia and stigma in the workplace.”
- <http://www.prideindiversity.com.au/resources/publications/>

- Minus18

- “Australia’s largest youth led organisation for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans youth.”
- <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/about-us/contact-us>