

LGBTQIA+ Frequently Asked Questions

I can't remember all the letters, is it okay to just say 'LGBT'?

If you can't remember all the letters in the full acronym, 'LGBT+' is fine – the + sign represents the identities that aren't specified in the first four letters. You can also use the umbrella terms 'queer' or 'rainbow'. 'Queer' is a reclaimed slur more likely to be used by LGBTQIA+ people themselves; if you're not sure, 'rainbow' or 'rainbow community' is a safe option.

What should I say to someone who comes out to me?

If someone comes out to you, it's important to remember that this may have been quite scary for them and they been very open and vulnerable with you. Your response needs to be sensitive.

You might consider the below in your response:

- Thank them for letting you know.
- If they have shared that they are transgender, you might ask them what their preferred pronouns are.
- Ask them if they'd like the information to be kept between you two or if they'd like for you to share it with anyone else.
- "I'm always happy to learn so please correct me if I get anything wrong"
- If they've come out as trans, you could even offer to take them on a shopping date to go get new clothing or make up or things that will make them feel more themselves. Validate who they are.
- Ask what it means for them
- Ask how they'd like you to support them

For service providers:

- You might ask them if there is anything you can do that would make them more comfortable

Don't:

- Judge them
- Pity them
- Down play it: It probably took a lot of courage to come out to you, this is not something that is insignificant.
- Try tell them they're wrong: This is not a time to share your beliefs
- Talk to other people about it unless they've said it's okay
- Make this the only characteristic you remember and talk about in regard to them. They are still the person you knew before.
- Treat them as a token. This means not using them as representation or an image of inclusivity and not calling on them every time something comes up regarding the LGBTQ+ community.
- Ask inappropriate questions: If you wouldn't have asked similar questions before they came out, don't ask them now.

If you're bisexual and in a relationship, does that mean you're just straight/gay now?

Being bisexual means you are sexually attracted to more than one gender. Being in a relationship doesn't change which gender(s) you are attracted to. You may not be paying attention to anyone else or finding yourself attracted to any other person because you're in a committed relationship but if you find more than one gender sexually attractive then you are still bisexual. So, no, being in a monogamous relationship doesn't make you any less bisexual.

If someone's pronouns are she/they, does that mean I have to switch? Can I just pick one?

There are a few reasons a person might use a mix of pronouns so it can help to ask if they have a preference over one of the pronouns. Often people will list their preferred pronoun first. However, for most people who use mixed pronouns, it's nice if you change it up from time to time. You never know what other people are using and typically people are going to default to using 'he' or 'she'. So having someone change it up can be quite validating and refreshing.

What's the difference between bisexual and pansexual?

Bisexuality means being attracted to more than one gender but not necessarily all genders. Pansexuality means being attracted to any and all genders.

Is cis/cisgender a slur or an insult?

No, cisgender is not an insult. It just refers to a person whose gender corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth. It is a differentiation between being transgender or not.

My lesbian friend calls herself a dyke, does that mean I'm allowed to use that word?

'Dyke' is a homophobic slur that has been reappropriated by lesbians to refer to masculinity or toughness. It is best to leave this word to be used by lesbians to refer to themselves.

What does 'queer' mean? Why is it its own letter in the acronym, isn't it covered by the other letters?

'Queer' can be either an umbrella term that encompasses all of the other identities in the LGBTQIA+ community, or an identity in itself. Some people use 'queer' to mean that they have multiple identities (they might be gay, trans, and intersex, for example); some use it to mean that they don't fall neatly into any categories; and some use it to express that they are definitely in the acronym somewhere but aren't quite sure where yet (they might be still figuring out if they're gay or bisexual, or whether they're non-binary or a trans woman, etc.).

If I'm talking about something that happened to my trans friend Jessica when she still went by Jason, which name and pronouns should I use?

Whatever name and pronouns your friend uses now (in this case, Jessica and 'she'), are what you should use when you talk about them. They don't become two separate people with a past life and a new life. Jessica has always been Jessica, she just didn't know or wasn't safe or comfortable enough to come out. It can be hurtful to be referred to as, or reminded of, someone that didn't feel like who they really were.

How do I ask for someone's pronouns?

- What are your preferred pronouns?
- My name is [name], I go by [pronouns], may I ask what pronouns you use?
- I realise I've never actually checked what pronouns you prefer, I'm sorry about that. Can I ask now, what pronouns would you like me to use?

I'm cis, should I put my pronouns in my email signature?

Yes, putting your pronouns in your email signature lets people know that you are open to a conversation about pronouns and potentially other LGBTQ+ related conversations.

What does 'assigned gender at birth' mean?

Your assigned gender at birth is the gender that is given to you based on the external genitalia you are born with (i.e usually boy or girl).

Do bisexuals cheat more than straight people?

No

How do people know they're gay/bi/trans?

Many LGBTQIA+ people know their identity in the same way straight, cisgender people do – they've just always been attracted to the same gender, or always known that their gender didn't match up with their body or the way other people saw them. For others, it's more of a process of figuring out exactly where they fit; they know that they're not straight and/or not cis but it might take them a while to figure out their identity (it's particularly common for teenagers to need to try on a few different labels before they find the one that belongs to them).

What's the difference between being gender non-conforming and being trans?

Someone who is gender non-conforming may be cisgender or transgender. Being gender non-conforming simply means you do not comply with the norms associated with binary genders.