



LAUSD Human Relations, Diversity & Equity
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OUT for Safe Schools Presents

SOGIE Handbook of Language & Vocabulary

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General Guidelines

This handbook of terms for sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) is offered to help staff develop linguistic competencies to support Gender and Sexually Diverse (GSD) students, families, and staff.

Language has the power to build bridges or walls. Groups often develop their own vernacular that can be unfamiliar to others. Furthermore, language is fluid and contextual. Even within a community, terms may have cultural, generational, and geographic specificities. A word that is affirming for one may feel distancing for another.

The safest strategy is to simply ask. "I want to use terminology that is polite and respectful. I appreciate your guidance."

When writing about [gender identity](#), descriptors with modifiers (e.g., cisgender women, transgender women) are more specific than descriptors without modifiers (e.g., women) or general nongendered terms (e.g., people, individuals).

When writing about [sexual orientation](#), the names of people's orientations (e.g., lesbians, gay men, bisexual people, straight people) are more specific than broad group labels (e.g., gay).



Common SOGIE Terms & Definitions

(Note: this is not an exclusive list)

advocate

1. *noun* : a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity. 2 *verb* : to actively support or plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance or educate others.

AFAB/AMAB

Acronym for assigned female at birth or assigned male at birth

agender

adj. : a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.

ally

/"al-lie"/ - noun : a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. We consider people to be active allies who take action on in support and respect.

androgyny

/"an-jrah-jun-ee"/ (androgynous) - 1 noun : a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity; 2 *adj.* : occasionally used in place of "intersex" to describe a person with both female and male anatomy, generally in the form "androgyne."

androsexual / androphilic

adj. : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to men, males, and/or masculinity. See *gynesexual / gynephilic*

asexual

Adj: asexual is a sexual orientation that exists on a spectrum. While most asexual people have little interest in having sex, they may experience romantic attraction. Others may not. Often called ACE for short.



biological sex

noun : a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply "sex," "physical sex," "anatomical sex," or specifically as "sex assigned at birth."

BIPOC

Adj.: an acronym used to refer to Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

bisexual

1 *noun & adj.* : a person who experiences attraction to some men and women. **2** *adj.* : a person who experiences attraction to some people of their gender and another gender. Bisexual attraction does not have to be equally split, or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders an individual may be attracted to. *See also pansexual.*

butch

noun & adj. : a person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally, or emotionally. 'Butch' is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but is also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

cisgender

/"siss-jendur"/ - adj. : a gender description for when someone's sex assigned at birth and gender identity correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, and identifies as a man). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to "cis."

cisnormativity

noun : the assumption, in individuals and in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans* identities and people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

cissexism

noun : behavior that grants preferential treatment to cisgender people, reinforces the idea that being cisgender is somehow better or more "right" than being transgender, and/or makes other genders invisible.



clocked

Typically used in the transgender community when a cisgender person recognizes that a person is transgender.

coming out

1 noun : the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one's own sexuality or gender identity (to "come out" to oneself). **2 verb** : the process by which one shares one's sexuality or gender identity with others.

cross-dresser

noun : a person who dresses as another gender ("cross-dresses") for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, and sexual gratification (should not be confused with transgender).

down low

adj. : typically referring to men who identify as straight but who secretly have sex with men. Down low (or DL) originated in, and is most commonly used by, communities of color.

drag king/queen

noun : someone who performs (hyper-) masculinity/femininity theatrically.

dyke

noun : referring to a masculine presenting lesbian. While often used derogatorily, it is also reclaimed affirmatively by some lesbians and gay women as a positive self-identity term.

fag(got)

noun : derogatory term referring to a gay person, or someone perceived as queer. While often used derogatorily, it is also used reclaimed by some gay people (often gay men) as a positive in-group term.

feminine-presenting; masculine-presenting

adj. : a way to describe someone who expresses gender in a more feminine/masculine way. Often confused with feminine-of-center/masculine-of-center, which generally include a focus on identity as well as expression.



femme

noun & adj. : someone who identifies themselves as feminine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Often used to refer to a feminine-presenting queer woman or people.

fluid(ity)

adj. : generally with another term attached, like "gender fluid" or fluid sexuality, fluid(ity) describes an identity that may change or shift (e.g., man and woman, bi and straight).

FtM / F2M; MtF / M2F

abbr. : female-to-male transgender person; male-to-female transgender person. Outdated term that is not recommended. *See transgender.*

gay

1 *adj.* : experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of the same gender. Can be used to refer to men who are attracted to other men and women who are attracted to women. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who is not straight (*see LGBTQ and queer*)

gender binary

noun : the idea that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two.

gender confirmation surgery

noun : surgical options that alter the presentation of a person's biological sex. Procedures may be referenced as "top" (chest) or "bottom" (genital) surgery. Not all transgender, non-binary or gender variant people desire or can afford surgical procedures.

gender expression

noun : the external display of one's gender, through a combination of clothing, grooming, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as "gender presentation."

genderfluid / gender fluid

1 *adj.* : a gender identity label often used by people whose sense of self in relation to gender changes. The time frame might be over the course of many months, days, shorter, or longer, but the consistent experience is one of change. **2** *adj.* : a general descriptor for



an individual's or society's ever-changing (i.e., "fluid") embodiment of gender, in the ways it affects us or we express it individually (e.g., someone might express gender fluidly), and/or in how it is socially constructed.

gender identity

noun : one's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither - how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. Gender identity doesn't always align with biological sex or sex assigned at birth.

gender non-conforming

1 *adj.* : a gender descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender expression or identity (e.g., "masculine woman"). **2** *adj.* : a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as "GNC." Considered outdated. See non-binary

gender normative / gender straight

adj. : someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, aligns with society's gender-based expectations.

gender and sexual diverse (GSD)

Adj. : an inclusive umbrella term for persons outside the cisgender heterosexual binary.

genderqueer

1 *adj.* : a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid).

gender variant

adj. : someone who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser). See gender non-conforming

gynesexual / gynephilic

adj. : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to women, females, and/or femininity. See androsexual / androphilic



hermaphrodite

noun : term for a combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. The term is outdated and should not be used. *The preferred term is intersex.*

heteronormativity

noun : the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities: when learning a woman is married, asking her what her husband's name is. Heteronormativity conflates gendered social norms with sexuality.

heterosexism

noun : behavior that grants preferential treatment to heterosexual people, reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is better or more "right" than queerness, and/or makes other sexualities invisible.

heterosexual / straight

adj. : experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of a different gender.

homophobia / homophobic

noun / adj. : an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) toward LGB people. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGB. Internalized homophobia is shame about being LGB. *See also transphobia*

homosexual

adj. & noun : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This term is considered stigmatizing due to its history as a category of mental illness and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

intersex

adj. : term for a combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. Formerly known as hermaphrodite, but these terms are outdated and derogatory.



LGBTQIA2S+

Initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender, queer/question, intersex, asexual/ally, two-spirit, and more

lesbian

noun & adj. : women who are primarily attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women.

lipstick lesbian

noun : Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is assumed to be (or passes for) straight.

masc

noun & adj.: someone who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Often used to refer to a masculine-presenting queer person. also masculine of center or MOC

metrosexual

adj. : a man with a strong aesthetic sense who spends more time, energy, or money on his appearance and grooming than is considered gender normative.

MSM / WSW

abbr. : men who have sex with men or women who have sex with women, to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities: because a man is straight, it doesn't mean he's not having sex with men. Often used in the field of HIV/Aids education, prevention, and treatment.

Mx.

/ "mix" or "schwa" / - *noun* : an honorific (e.g. Mr., Ms., Mrs.) that is gender neutral. It is often the option of choice for folks who do not identify within the gender binary: Mx. Smith is a great teacher.

Non-binary (NB or enby)

Non-binary gender identity is used to describe individuals who may experience a gender identity that is neither exclusively male or female or is in between or beyond



both genders. Non-binary individuals may identify as gender fluid, agender (without gender), third gender, or something else entirely.

outing

verb : men who have sex with men or women who have sex with women, to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities: because a man is straight, it doesn't mean he's not having sex with men. Often used in the field of HIV/Aids education, prevention, and treatment.

pansexual

adj. : a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Often shortened to "pan."

passing

1 *adj. & verb* : trans* people being accepted as, or able to "pass for," a member of their self-identified gender identity (regardless of sex assigned at birth) without being identified as trans*. **2** *adj.* : an LGB/queer individual who is believed to be or perceived as straight.

[preferred] gender pronoun (PGP)

abbr. : preferred gender pronouns are used during introductions and signature lines to indicate the honorifics by which one wants to be identified. Many suggest removing the "preferred," because it indicates flexibility and/or the power for the speaker to decide which pronouns to use for someone else. The terms "affirmed" or "lived" gender are favored.

polyamory / polyamorous

noun : refers to the practice of, desire for, or orientation toward having ethical, honest, and consensual non-monogamous relationships (i.e. relationships that may include multiple partners). Often shortened to "poly."

queer

1 *adj.* : an umbrella term to describe individuals who don't identify as straight and/or cisgender. **2** *noun* : a slur used to refer to someone who isn't straight and/or cisgender. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, and how it is still used as a slur many communities, it is not embraced or used by all LGBTQ people. The term "queer" can be used interchangeably with LGBTQ (e.g., "queer people" instead of "LGBTQ people").



questioning

verb, adj. : an individual who or a time when someone is unsure about or exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

QPOC / QTPOC / QGNC

abbr. : initialisms that stand for queer people of color, queer and/or trans people of color (see also BIPOC); and queer gender non-conforming

sexual orientation

noun : the type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one has the capacity to feel for some others, generally labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Often confused with sexual preference.

sexual preference

noun : an ill-favored term that reduces the complexity of sexual orientation to sexual behavior. The term is considered offensive. Do not use.

sex reassignment surgery (SRS)

noun : surgical procedures to alter the appearance of a person's biological sex. Procedures may be reference as "top" (chest) or "bottom" (genital) surgery. Not all transgender people desire or can afford surgical interventions. *Gender confirmation surgery is the preferred term.*

sexual orientation, gender identity/expression (SOGI or SOGIE)

A generic term that recognizes *all* sexual orientations and gender identities, including heterosexual and cisgender.

stealth

adj. : a trans person who is not "out" as trans, and is perceived/known by others as cisgender.

straight

adj. : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to some people who are not their same sex/gender. Also known as heterosexual.

stud



noun : most commonly used to indicate a Black/African-American and/or Latina, masculine, lesbian/queer woman. Also known as 'butch' or 'aggressive'.

they

pronoun : a gender-neutral pronoun that is grammatically correct in the singular and plural forms. E.g. My friend Jay is visiting. They love the Hollywood Bowl.

third gender

noun : for a person who does not identify with either man or woman, but identifies with another gender. This gender category is used by societies that recognize three or more genders, both contemporary and historic, and is also a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary.

top surgery

noun : surgery for the construction of a male-typical chest or breast augmentation for a female-typical chest.

trans*

adj. : an umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially-defined gender norms. Trans with an asterisk is often used in written form to reference the larger group nature of the term, and specifically including non-binary identities, as well as transgender men (transmen) and transgender women (transwomen).

transgender

1 *adj.* : a gender description for someone who has transitioned (or is transitioning) from living as one gender to another. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term for anyone whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, but does not identify as a man).

transition / transitioning

noun, verb : referring to the process of a transgender/ non-binary/ gender variant person changing aspects of themselves (e.g., their appearance, name, pronouns, or making physical changes to their body) to be more congruent with the way in which they know themselves to be (as opposed to the gender they lived as pre-transitioning).

transman; transwoman



noun : a man/woman who was not assigned that gender via sex at birth, and transitioned (socially, medically, and/or legally) to their gender identity, signified by the second part of the term (i.e., -man, -woman). Some trans people wish to simply be referred to as men or women; others prefer to keep the prefix "trans-" in their identity label. Always recognize individuals by their *affirmed* gender.

transphobia

noun : the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans* people, the trans* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society. Transphobic - **adj.** : a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes, thoughts, intents, towards trans* people.

transsexual

noun & adj. a person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex. The term is outdated and should not be used. *See transgender.*

transvestite

noun : a person who dresses as another gender ("cross-dresses") for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, and sexual gratification (often called a "cross-dresser," and should not be confused with transgender). The term is outdated and should not be used. *See cross-dressing*

two-spirit

noun : is an umbrella term traditionally within Native American communities to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both feminine and masculine genders.

ze / zir

/ "zee", "zerr" or "zeer"/ - conjugated alternate pronouns that are gender neutral to replace the gendered pronouns of he/him/his and she/her/hers. *See also "they" as a widely used gender-neutral pronoun.*



Sources

American Psychological Association, Bias-Free Language

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/>

GLAAD Reference Guide - <https://www.glaad.org/reference>

It's Pronounced Metrosexual - <https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/>

For LAUSD resources contact

Human Relations, Diversity & Equity.

<https://achieve.lausd.net/human-relations> OR judy.chiasson@lausd.net

[Educational Equity Compliance Office](#) or EquityCompliance@lausd.net