

A Friendly Guide to Gender Inclusivity in Everyday Speech

A Queer Booklet by a Queer Author

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Imagine this...

You are with your family or friends in a restaurant. Before ordering, you go to the bathroom. Observing your reflection in the mirror, you feel secure in your appearance as it relates to your personal gender identity. You return to your table, feeling good. The server comes to take your order. “What can I get for you, (insert incorrect gender pronoun here)?”

Your mood deflates and you sadly order your personal pizza and cheesy breadsticks for the table.

This happens to myself and countless other gender-nonconforming people every day.

How can we modify the way we speak to include those who don't identify as cisgender and/or heterosexual?

Defining Gender Identity and Gender Expression

Gender (*not* sex) is a social construct invented by humans. Sex is something entirely different that refers to the reproductive process.

Sex ≠ Gender Identity.

Besides, someone else's genitalia is none of your business anyway!

Some more definitions to keep in mind:

Gender Identity (as defined by the Human Rights Campaign) is 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.

Gender Expression (as defined by the Human Rights Campaign) is the 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 being either masculine or feminine.

In the following pages, we'll explore what the difference is between gender identity and gender expression.

Language is slowly evolving to include a wide range of *gender identities*. Some examples include:

- Nonbinary (or “Enby” for short)
- Gender Neutral
- Agender
- Demiboy/Demigirl
- Pangender
- Androgynous
- Bigender
- Genderfluid
- Transfeminine/ Transmasculine
- Gender-Nonconforming
- Genderqueer
- *And many more!*

The thing with words we use to define ourselves is that, while many mean similar things, the distinction is important to some people. Some are more vague, and some are more specific.

Personally, I like to use the term *Nonbinary* to identify myself. It is a large enough umbrella term under which my identity falls.

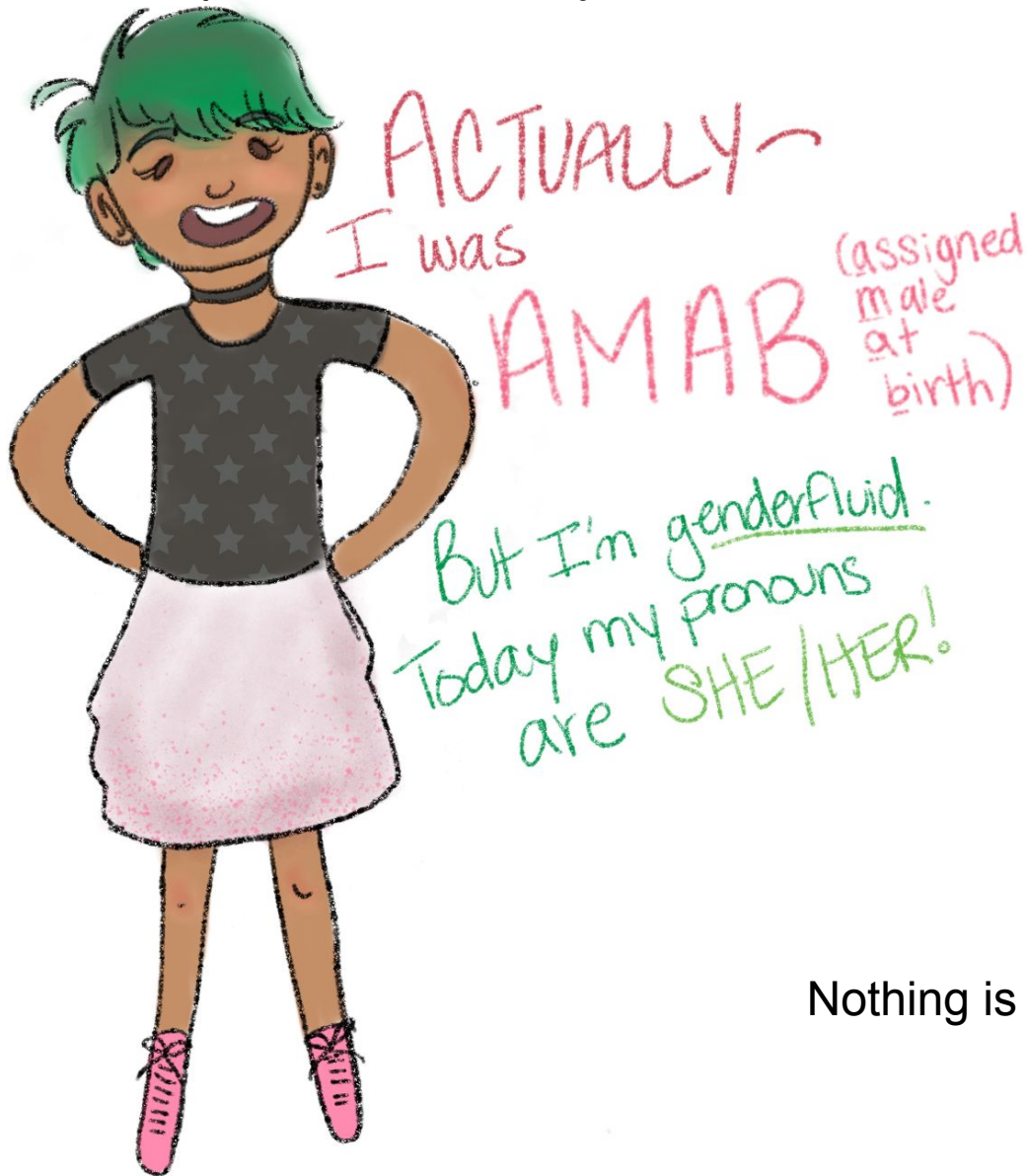


Others may like to combine multiple terms until they feel it is specific enough for them (i.e. “transmasculine nonbinary” or “femme genderfluid”).

Expression

The way someone identifies personally is not always how they may outwardly present themselves.

“Well, that person is *obviously* a man/woman!”



Nothing is obvious.

Keep that in mind when you see strangers or meet new people!

We have stereotypes and physical cues that may indicate gender in our society-- take those cues and throw them out the window. People of any gender (yes, even someone who is not a man, or woman, or even both at the same time) can wear nail polish, have long hair, look “butch”, have facial hair, or act a certain way.

"I think I'm confused..."

That is **totally** OK!

When I started exploring *my own* gender identity, I was also very confused. There's a lot of new terminology I was trying to learn quickly in order to suss out where I landed on the huge venn diagram of gender. Luckily I was working with a great therapist who did not judge and asked questions if they did not understand! That is one of the most important things you can do in response to not understanding something:

ASK QUESTIONS!

Most people would much rather that you ask them about their identity than assume based on stereotypes.

Aren't sure where to start? Here are some good ways to politely address another's gender identity:

*"Hi, I was just wondering--
what pronouns do you use?"*

*If you don't know, or if it is a
stranger you're referring to, revert
to **they**.*

*"Do you see that **person wearing
red** over there?"*

*Rather than
"Do you see that
lady/man/boy/girl over there?"*

More Lingo for More Inclusion

Here are some commonly gendered words that you can try swapping out for gender neutral terms in your everyday speech!

Waiter/Waitress

Server

Fireman

Firefighter

Mailman/Mailwoman

Mail Person, Postal Worker

Ms./Mrs./Mr.

Mx.

Mankind

Humankind, People

Freshman

First-Year Student

Manmade

Artificial, Synthetic

Drag Queen/King

Drag Artist

Brother/Sister

Sibling

Son/Daughter

Child

Mom/Dad

Parent

Actor/Actress

Actor

Wife/Husband

Partner, Significant Other

You don't have to understand.

What you do need to do is respect those who are different from you. It can be scary to not understand something or someone, or not have the answers to everything. Take joy in learning and even in experiencing those moments of confusion.

Nobody is perfect! Even those in the gender-nonconforming and trans community (yes, including myself) mess up sometimes when it comes to using non-gender-specific language. It's all a part of being a normal human living in a time where there's a turnover of gender roles and expectations.

One of the best things you can do is to keep on trying.

Try to learn. Try to explore.

Try to ask questions, even if it's hard!

Try to love, not just tolerate.

Love the differences.

Normalize the differences.

Make a difference!

Glossary

AFAB

Assigned Female At Birth.

AMAB

Assigned Male At Birth.

agender

Genderless or without gender

androgynous

Can mean genderless or unattached to gender, but can also represent neutrality or being in-between masculinity and femininity

bigender

An identity in which a person is both masculine and feminine at the same time.

butch

An adjective to describe a more traditionally masculine appearance.

cisgender

Can be applied to someone who identifies with their assigned gender.

demi

(-boy, -girl)

Meaning half or partially. Someone using the identifier “demiboy” may feel that they are only half or part boy or male.

Glossary (cont'd)

femme

An adjective used to describe a more traditionally feminine appearance.

gender expression

How an individual may externally show their gender identity through clothing, hair, makeup, voice, or way of acting.

gender identity

One's innermost concept of self. Can be the same or different as their assigned sex at birth.

gender neutral

Similar to *androgynous*. Typically means in between masculine and feminine; somewhere in the middle.

gender nonconforming

Describes someone who does not adhere to traditional rules about gender roles and expression.

genderfluid

An identity in which one's gender shifts over time. For some, it is every day, for others, a few weeks, and at any other interval, depending on the person.

genderqueer

An umbrella term similar to *gender nonconforming*.

nonbinary

Not of the traditional male/female identities. Can encompass many different identities.

Glossary (cont'd)

pangender

Pan, meaning *all*. An identity in which someone feels that they are all genders at once. Similar to *bigender*.

pronouns

The more vague words used to reference someone without using their name.

He/Him/His, She/Her/Hers, They/Them/Theirs are more common, however, alternatives like *Xe/Xem/Xyrs* or *Ey/Em/Eirs* are also gender neutral, rather than *they*.

transfeminine

An identity in which someone who identifies in a more feminine way and may undergo medical treatment to achieve more traditional femininity.

transgender

An identity in which someone does not identify with their assigned sex and may undergo medical treatment to achieve their desired gender identity.

transmasculine

An identity in which someone who identifies in a more masculine way and may undergo medical treatment to achieve more traditional masculinity.