

GENDER & PRONOUNS

a brief introduction & quick tips

There's a lot more to being any gender than just one's sex assigned at birth. Anatomy does not always tell a person's complete story. It's important to understand some different terms and ideas so that you can best respect others and their identities.

SEX

Sex is a label that's assigned at birth based on the genitals and chromosomes someone's born with. Most cultures then connect certain expectations to this label, which in turn impacts how we see our body and ourselves.



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GENDER

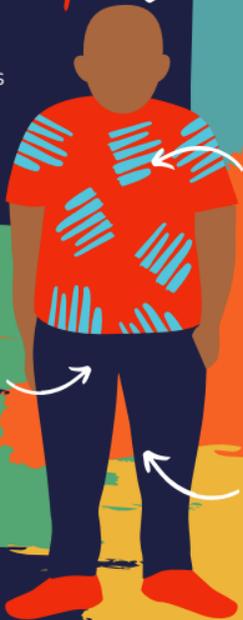
People tend to use "sex" and "gender" interchangeably. While connected, they're not the same. Once sex is assigned, a child's gender is presumed. Gender is the complex interrelationship between a person's body, identity, and social environment. A person's comfort in their gender is related to how these three dimensions feel in harmony.

GENDER IDENTITY

Gender identity is our internal experience and naming of gender. It can correspond with or differ from assigned sex at birth. Understanding of gender may come early for some, while how we communicate it can change over time.

GENDER EXPRESSION

Gender expression is how you present your gender through clothing, behavior, lifestyle, and personal appearance. This interacts with society's expectations around gender.



beyond the binary

Some people call the sex we're assigned at birth "biological sex." Having only two options (male/female) might not describe what's actually going on inside someone's body or accurately represent the wide range of biological diversity that exists! When someone's sexual and reproductive anatomy doesn't seem to fit these rigid definitions of female or male, they may identify as **intersex**.

It's easy to confuse sex and gender. Just remember that assigned sex is a label informed by biology and anatomy. Gender is an internal sense of self that interacts with societal expectations, usually based on the idea that the only options are man and woman (or what's called the **gender binary**).

Some people's assigned sex and gender identity are mostly congruent; these people are called **cisgender** or **cis**. Other people experience their gender identity as different from their assigned sex. These people may identify as **transgender** or **trans** or use other terms that fit (i.e. **non-binary**, **genderfluid**, **genderqueer**). For them, finding congruence between body, identity, and social environment may be more complex because of society's expectations around sex and gender. This process is sometimes referred to as **transitioning**.

Some people work towards congruence by choosing labels, expressing themselves through their appearance, and/or sharing the **pronouns** that best fit their gender identity.

TIPS

When people share their pronouns, they're potentially taking a risk in outing themselves by asking you to respect their identity. Here's some ideas on how to support them:

1

believe them

When someone tells you their pronouns or identities, use them! Don't argue or ask intrusive questions about their sex or body.

2

don't make assumptions

No matter how someone may look or act, you don't know their identities or pronouns until they tell you themselves. Use a person's name or "they/them" pronouns when you don't know how to refer to someone.

3

challenge the binary

Try not to use gendered language ("hey guys", "yes, ma'am", freshmen) and question why things are separated by gender at all.

4

educate yourself

Share your own pronouns so that others feel comfortable to do so. Learn about trans and non-binary figures and movements through history. Continue to reflect on the nuances of identity and where you place yourself within them!