

# Defining LGBTQ+ Words for Elementary Students

- + When children ask questions about LGBTQ+ words, it is sometimes best to offer simple and direct answers.
- + You might choose to answer a student's question with another question to figure out what they are really asking — is it about name calling, a classmate's two dads or something they saw on the internet? Listening first helps you respond.
- + Using examples helps students understand definitions.
- + Questions about LGBTQ+ words can provide teachable moments on topics like understanding differences and treating people with respect.
- + If a student uses an LGBTQ+ term in a derogatory way, ask them if they know what it means. If they don't, give a short definition and explain how that term is hurtful and mean. Let them know they should not use it in that way.
- + This list can serve as a starting place for educators to respond to questions about LGBTQ+ words. These suggested definitions can help to ensure that you feel confident in your own knowledge and ability to communicate these ideas to students.

## Gender

**Cisgender:** When your gender identity (how you feel) is the same as what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (girl/boy or sex assigned at birth).

**Gender Binary:** A way of seeing gender as two distinct and opposite groups — girl and boy. This idea doesn't include all the ways we can have a gender identity and express our gender.

**Gender Expansive:** Some people feel that the traditional ways of being a "boy" or "girl" do not fit for them. They live their lives showing that there are many ways to be a girl, boy, both or neither.

**Gender Expression:** People express themselves in many ways, such as through clothes or hairstyles. Sometimes people think that these things go with certain genders, but really you cannot guess someone's gender or pronouns from how they look. In our school we respect that every person is unique and different, and we don't tease or bully anyone about their personal expression.

**Gender Identity:** How you feel. Girl, boy, both or neither. Everyone has a gender identity.

**Intersex:** An umbrella term that refers to people who are born with bodies that are naturally different from what is traditionally considered female or male. (This occurs in about 2% of babies born, similar to the percentage for redheads.)

**Non-Binary:** People who do not feel like the words "girl" or "boy" fits. They may feel like both or neither. They sometimes use pronouns such as they, them, theirs.

**Sex Assigned At Birth:** When a baby is born, a doctor or midwife looks at the baby's body/anatomy and says they are a girl, boy or intersex.

**Transgender or Trans:** When your gender identity (how you feel) is different than what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (girl/boy or sex assigned at birth).

## Who You Love

**Bisexual:** People who love people of more than one gender. [In grades 3 – 5, you might say people who love or are attracted to people of more than one gender.]

**Gay:** People who love people of the same gender. [In grades 3 – 5, you might say people who love or are attracted to people of the same gender.]

**Heterosexual:** People who identify as women who only love [or are attracted to] people who identify as men. Also, people who identify as men who only love [or are attracted to] people who identify as women.

**Lesbian:** People who love people of the same gender — two women. [In grades 3 – 5, you might say people who love or are attracted to people of the same gender.]

**Pansexual:** People who love people of any gender. [In grades 3 – 5, you might say people who love or are attracted to people of any gender.]

**Sexual Orientation:** Who you love. [In grades 3 – 5, you might say who you love or are attracted to.]

## Gender and Who You Love

**LGBTQ+:** Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer.

**Queer:** People use this word as a way to identify with and celebrate people of all gender identities and all the ways people love each other. When used in a mean way, it is a word that hurts.