

Creating Trans*-Inclusive Classrooms

A Few Terms

Gender: Gender is often referred to as a social construction composed of one's gender identity and expression as well as societal perceptions of gender and gender roles. Gender may or may not “match” one's sex assigned at birth.

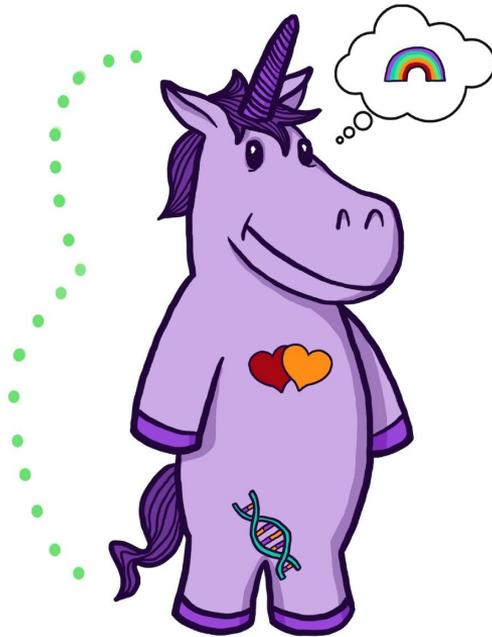
Sex: Sex tends to refer to biological characteristics like genitalia, chromosomes, and secondary sex characteristics (like body hair, breasts, etc) that are often used socially to “read” gender, but may not actually be an accurate indicator of a person's gender identity.

Cisgender: Cisgender, or cis for short, is a term used to describe someone whose gender identity aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Transgender: Transgender has become something of an umbrella term to refer to people whose gender expression or gender identity don't align with their gender assigned at birth. It may also broadly refer to any gender non-conforming person.

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

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Gender Identity

-  Female/Woman/Girl
-  Male/Man/Boy
-  Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression/Presentation

-  Feminine
-  Masculine
-  Other

Sex Assigned at Birth

- Female Male Other/Intersex
- 
 - 
 - 

Sexually Attracted To

-  Women
-  Men
-  Other Gender(s)

Romantically/Emotionally Attracted To

-  Women
-  Men
-  Other Gender(s)

Use the Gender Unicorn to visualize the complex makeup of gender, sex, and sexuality and the multiple ways people can inhabit these aspects of identity.

TRANS*

I recently adopted the term “trans*” (with the asterisk) in my writing. I think you should, too. If it’s new to you, let me help clarify. Trans* is one word for a variety of identities that are incredibly diverse, but share one simple, common denominator: a trans* person is not your traditional cisgender wo/man. Beyond that, there is a lot of variation.

WHAT DOES THE * STAND FOR?

***TRANSGENDER**

***TRANSSEXUAL *TRANSVESTITE**

***GENDERQUEER**

***GENDERFLUID *NON-BINARY *GENDERF*CK**

***GENDERLESS**

***AGENDER *NON-GENDERED**

***THIRD GENDER**

***TWO-SPIRIT * BIGENDER**

***TRANS MAN**

***TRANS WOMAN**

readmore at ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com

Far from a comprehensive list, this chart helps us understand the use of “trans*” as an inclusive term that serves as shorthand to represent the wide variety of non-cisgender, transgender, and gender expansive identities.

Please note: “transsexual” and “transvestite” are terms that may be self-claimed, but do have a long and complicated medical history, so we tend to refrain from using these words to describe trans* people today.

Please note: “Third Gender” and “Two-Spirit” have specific ethnic and cultural histories and are identities reserved for Indigenous and Native American peoples, as well as some Polynesian, South Asian, and East Asian peoples.

Etiquette

1. How to ask about pronouns
 - a. Ask for someone's "pronouns" rather than their "preferred pronouns" or "preferred gender pronouns (PGPs)"
 - b. Normalize the inclusion of pronouns as part of your introductory process. For example, "Let's all go around and say our name, pronoun, and where we're from"
 - c. If not sure how to broach the question, simply say something like, "I just want to make sure I get your pronouns right; can you tell me which pronouns you use?"

2. Make sure you listen and try to use correct pronouns
 - a. It's great that you're taking the time to learn someone's pronouns, but don't just do it because it's the "right" or "PC" or "cool" thing to do. Actually take the time to listen, take note of someone's name and pronoun, and make every effort to get it right.

3. Don't minimize the issue
 - a. Pronouns might not be important to everyone in the room, but they are probably important to at least one person in the room. And it may not be obvious who that person is. So thank you for making an effort and taking it seriously.

4. It's ok to make a mistake!
 - a. If you make a mistake, just correct yourself and move on. Avoid getting flustered or embarrassed. We all make mistakes and we can all correct those mistakes.
 - b. If you are nervous about making a mistake, be up front with others. For example, "I'm still learning to be a good ally, and I might make a mistake. Please correct me if I use the wrong name or pronoun for you."

5. Questions/terms to avoid
 - a. Never ask people whether they've had or plan to have surgery or take hormones. Never ask about their genitalia, and don't ask for their birth name or "real" name.
 - b. Some terms that you may hear other people use either to describe themselves or others may actually be offensive. For example, don't use "tranny" or "transgendered." Also, "transgender" is not a noun. Never refer to "that transgender" or "those transgenders."

Classroom Strategies

- Incorporate pronouns into introduction activities
 - Ask students to go around introduce their name, pronoun, and whatever other introductory material you'd like. Model this for them, so they understand how to introduce pronouns if they are unfamiliar with it
 - If you have students fill out index cards, include pronouns as one of the pieces of information you request
 - For large lectures, ask students to log onto a Google doc and input their information, so you have it. See a sample here: [Sample Introduction Spreadsheet for Lectures](#)
- When initiating group work, ask students to reintroduce themselves and their pronouns to their group members
 - Every time you break students up for group or partner activities, try to remind them to again introduce themselves with name and pronoun to their classmates. This provides a consistent check-in to help avoid misgendering in small group work and also recognizes that names and/or pronouns can also change over the course of a quarter.
- Pay attention to binary or gendered language
 - Pay attention to your own language when leading class discussions and lectures.
 - Do you say “you guys” often? Instead, try “You all,” “Y’all,” “Folks,” “All of you,” “Everyone”
 - Do you say “ladies and gentlemen”? Instead, try “Everyone,” “Folks,” etc.
- Reconsider gendered activities
 - If you ever divide your class up into “boys vs. girls” or “men vs. women” for class activities, consider that some people may not fit on either side of that divide.
 - Instead divide groups by counting off, spatial location in the room, etc.
- If appropriate to course goals, bring trans* identities into course content
 - Consider how you might bring trans* issues into course discussions: assign readings that focus on trans* topics or show a film that takes up the issue
 - Avoid having a “trans* day” and instead try to connect those discussions and materials to other topics throughout the quarter

For Further Reading

Anderson, West. “Pronoun Round Etiquette” on *The Body is Not an Apology*. Sept. 8, 2015. [Access Article Here](#)

Baron, Dennis. “What’s Your Pronoun?” on *The Web of Language*. Sept. 4, 2015. [Access Blog Post Here](#)

Enke, Finn. “Note on Terms and Concepts” in *Transfeminist Perspectives*. Temple University Press, 2012. [PDF Available Here](#)

Pomerleau, Clark A. “College Transitions: Recommended Policies for Trans Students and Employees” in *Transfeminist Perspectives*. Temple University Press, 2012. [PDF Available Here](#)

Stryker, Susan. “An Introduction to Transgender Terms and Concepts” in *Transgender History*. Seal Press, 2008. [PDF Available Here](#)

TransWhat?: A Guide Towards Allyship. transwhat.org. [Glossary Available Here](#)

The Pronoun Game. Learn and practice new pronouns! [Play the pronoun game here](#)