



Do's and Don'ts

Assumptions / Stereotypes

- Don't assume that LGBTQ+ people are more open to discussing sex
- Don't use language that sexualizes LGBTQ+ people
- Do treat LGBTQ+ people the same as anyone else
- Do understand that an individual's LGBTQ status is only a very small part of who they are
- Don't assume that LGBTQ+ people have certain politics, views, etc.
- Don't make assumptions about a person's gender identity/expression based on their sexual orientation, and vice versa (for example, assuming that a gay man is interested in fashion solely because he is gay)

Terminology and word choices

- Don't say "lifestyle" or "choice" when you mean "sexual orientation"
- Don't say "sexual preference" when you mean "sexual orientation"
- Don't say "those people" or "you people"
- Don't say "homosexual" when you mean "gay", "lesbian", "bisexual", or some other identity.
- Do include the entire LGBTQ+ community in language (don't just say gay and lesbian)
- Don't say "transgendered"
- Don't say "a transgender"
- Don't say "tranny," even if you are a member of the LGBTQ community
- Don't refer to a LGBTQ+ person's significant other as their "special friend"
- Do follow the LGBTQ+'s person's lead in terms of word choices
- Don't use "queer" if you are not sure the person is comfortable with the term. Although many people have reclaimed the word, some LGBT+ people are offended by the word.
- Don't refer to someone as "changing" their gender
- Do ask people what terms they feel comfortable with



HOW TO BE AN ALLY

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Conversation

- Don't assume that just because you are an ally you have the right to ask intrusive questions about the person's sex life, politics, etc. (for example, asking "how do you have sex")
- Do respect personal boundaries
- If appropriate to the relationship and you are inquiring about whether person has a significant other, use that term or other open, inclusive, gender neutral terms (e.g., "partner")
- Try to resist the tendency to bring up LGBTQ+ topics (ie. "gays I have known") immediately after someone discloses their LGBTQ+ status or frequently when you are speaking with LGBTQ+ people
- Don't comment on whether or not an individual looks gay, transgender, etc. – LGBTQ+ individuals are all different and doing so can be very triggering for the person
- Don't ask questions about personal medical issues (e.g., "Have you had "the surgery?")
- Don't ever ask about genitals. Never. Under any circumstances.
- Do listen, and take your cue from the LGBTQ+ person regarding what they do and don't want to share or talk about
- Don't mistakenly "out" a person as LGBTQ+ (for example, by talking about them, or assuming that others know)
- Don't ask others if they think someone is LGBTQ+
- Do be supportive but don't over-compensate
- Do talk with LGBTQ+ people about the same things you would talk about with anyone else – the weather, sports, hobbies, etc.
- Don't limit conversation with LGBTQ+ individuals to LGBTQ+ issues
- Don't ask "Which one of you is the [guy/girl] in the relationship?"
- Don't make inquiries that begin with "when you were a _____" (for example, "when you were a man, did people treat you differently?")
- Don't refer to a transgender individual as a "transgender man" or "transgender woman" unless it is relevant because it can demean their identity as a man or woman
- Do apologize if you make a mistake, and then move on. Don't make a scene.

Awareness

- Do understand that transgender individuals are not all gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. Some transgender people identify as straight.
- Do understand that LGBTQ+ youth may be particularly vulnerable and sensitive



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Transgender

- Do describe people who transition as transgender, and use transgender as an adjective.
- Don't use transgender as a noun. For example, don't say: "Sally Johnson is a transgender."
- Don't use "transgendered." Transgender never needs an extraneous "-ed" at the end.
- Don't use "transsexual" or "transvestite."
- Do refer to someone's transgender woman/man identity as her/his gender identity, not her/his sexual orientation.
- Don't speculate about medical procedures transgender people may or may not choose to undertake as part of their transition. This is private medical information, and a transgender identity is not dependent on medical procedures.
- Don't imply that someone who comes out as transgender (regardless of their age) was lying or being deceptive because he or she chose to keep that information private.
- Don't indulge in superficial critiques of a transgender person's femininity or masculinity. Commenting on how well a transgender person conforms to conventional standards of femininity or masculinity is reductive and insulting.

Gender neutrality

- Do try to avoid gendered terms if they aren't necessary (e.g., say "child" not "son")
- Do create a more inclusive environment by using gender neutral and inclusive language (for example, use words like "partner" and "significant other" instead of "husband" or "wife")
- Do avoid reference to gender on forms, applications, etc. if you don't need it.
- Don't say "ladies and gentlemen," this excludes people who don't strongly identify with either
- Do open events to all genders (for example, don't assume that men would not want to be invited to an event about fashion and make-up)

Pronouns

- Don't assume a person's pronouns based on their perceived gender or gender expression.
- Don't use the wrong pronoun – pronouns really matter.
- Do ask (if you truly need to) "what pronoun do you prefer?"
- If you use the wrong pronoun, apologize and move on. Don't make a scene.



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Bathrooms

- Don't police people's bathroom choices. When possible, ensure gender-inclusive bathrooms are available.

Support

- Do be affirming and let your LGBTQ+ friends and colleagues know that you love them just as they are.
- Don't suggest that you accept a person "even though" they are an LGBTQ+ individual.
- Do encourage employment and promotion of LGBTQ+ people.
- Do speak out and express your objection if someone else is making stereotypical and/or offensive jokes or statements about LGBTQ+ people or issues.
- Do offer health insurance benefits that cover gender transition related medical care.
- Do ensure that people at the top of large organizations are vocal about being allies and actively involved in promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Do give money to LGBTQ+ organizations.
- Do get training and education on LGBTQ+ issues, no matter how much you think you know already.
- Do spend time with members of the LGBTQ+ community. It is very diverse.
- Do join LGBTQ+ organizations.
- Do include younger persons in your efforts to be an ally as they are often more inclusive and aware of LGBTQ+ issues.

Issues/ Concerns

- The sexual orientation do's and don'ts are hard to combine with gender identity
- Too many "don'ts" scares people off; have it be "things to be sensitive to"

More resources are available at https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/sexual_orientation/resources