



RENTON  
TECHNICAL  
COLLEGE

# LGBTQ Terminology and FAQs

## A Conversation Guide for RTC Staff, Faculty and Students

Student Programs & Engagement

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### INTRODUCTION

This document serves as a guide for RTC staff, faculty and students to commonly-asked questions and terminology related to the LGBTQ community. Use this guide to help inform conversations focused on LGBTQ issues. We are committed to promoting a safe and inclusive learning environment for LGBTQ students at Renton Technical College.

### WHAT DOES LGBT STAND FOR?

**Lesbian:** A woman who has significant sexual and romantic attractions to members of the same sex, or who identifies as a member of the lesbian community.

**Gay:** One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions primarily to members of the same sex (as oneself), or who identifies as a member of the gay community. Sometimes refers only to gay males and lesbians.

**Bisexual** One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions to members of both the same and other sex, or who identify as members of the bisexual community.

**Transgender:** Transgender is an umbrella term often used to refer to people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may or may not use a different name or pronoun than the one they were assigned at birth and they may or may not pursue hormone therapy or surgery.

**Queer:** Think of queer as an umbrella term. It includes anyone who a) wants to identify as queer and b) who feels somehow outside of the societal norms in regards to gender, sexuality or/and even politics. Today, more and more people are coming out “queer,” much to the dismay of the older generation of the GLBT community who is used to hearing it as the oppressors attempt to degrade and dehumanize them. Although not exclusively used by the younger generation, and not used by all youth in all cities and towns, it does seem that more GLBT people are choosing queer as their term of identification than GLBT people ten years ago and that those who choose to identify in this way actually benefit from not choosing a specific label. Today the choice to not identify using a more specific label is a way for all who are different to bond together and create a movement of full acceptance within a society that wants to box them in, understand them in concrete terms, and then choose how to relate to them. Not choosing a specific label is kind of like saying, “Why does it matter

how I'm different, when I'm different, or why I'm different? Just let there be a place in this society for difference- of any sort- and accept me any way that I am or am not. Accept me as queer."

## **LGBTQ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### What is the difference between sex and gender?

Sex/Sexual Identity is the identification of being biologically male, female or intersex and this identification is assigned at birth. Each of us has a biological sex — whether we are female, male, or intersex.

Gender/Gender identity is a basic self-conviction and our social and legal status as men, women, gender neutral or other. This conviction is not contingent upon the individual's biological sex. This also has no bearing on the individual's sexual orientation. Each of us has a gender and gender identity. Our gender identity is our deepest feelings about our gender. We express our gender identity in the way that we act masculine, feminine, neither, or both. Some of us are transgender — which means that our biological sex and our gender identity do not match up.

### What are gender roles?

Gender roles are the socially constructed and culturally specific behavior and appearance expectations imposed on women (**feminine**) and men (**masculine**). Someone who identifies as **androgynous** has the quality of simultaneously exhibiting *masculine* and *feminine* characteristics. **Gender neutral** describes clothing, behaviors, thoughts, feelings, relationships, etc. which are considered appropriate for members of both sexes.

### How is sexual orientation different from gender identity?

Sexual orientation describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to another person (for example: straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual). Gender identity is someone's personal sense of their own gender (for example: male, female).

### Why should I never use the phrases "sexual preference" or "sexual choice"?

These terms should not be used because sexual orientation is not a preference or a choice.

### Why should I support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality?

LGBTQ rights are not special rights. Individuals who identify as LGBTQ deserve the same civil rights as individuals who identify as straight. However, discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is still legal in many states, a LGBTQ person can be fired from their job simply because of who they love or how they express their gender, same-sex couples cannot legally be married in the majority of states in the United States, LGBTQ youth face constant harassment and abuse in schools across the country, and it is clear that the road to full equality and acceptance is a long one.

## **ADDITIONAL LGBTQ RESOURCES**

### Human Rights Campaign – [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender political organization with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that LGBT Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

### PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) – [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of LGBT persons, their families and friends through support, education and advocacy. PFLAG provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

### GLAAD – [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)

GLAAD amplifies the voice of the LGBT community by empowering real people to share their stories, holding the media accountable for the words and images they present, and helping grassroots organizations communicate effectively. By ensuring that the stories of LGBT people are heard throughout the media, GLAAD promotes understanding, increases acceptance and advances equality.

### Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals – [www.lgbtcampus.org](http://www.lgbtcampus.org)

This consortium works to critically transform higher education environments so that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, faculty, administrators, staff, and alumni/ae have equity in every respect.