

Sexual and Romantic Orientation Terminology Guide

This is not an exhaustive list of terms related to sexual and romantic orientation. Each of these terms could be defined differently depending on the person. A person may also identify with a sexual orientation and a non-corresponding romantic orientation (ex. bisexual and grayromantic).

Allosexual: A person who is not asexual, demisexual, or graysexual.

Androromantic/Androsexual: A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to men, males, and/or masculinity. Typically used by monosexual folks who identify with a non-binary gender.

Aromantic/Asexual: A person who does not experience romantic (former) and/or sexual (latter) attraction for others. This does not mean they may not be interested in sexual (former) or romantic (latter) relationships. Asexual folks may identify themselves or their community with the term “ace,” and aromantic folks may identify themselves or their community with the term “aro.”

Bioromantic/Bisexual: A person who is sexually attracted to people of their own gender and/or sex and people of a different gender and/or sex. However, it can also be used to describe a person who is attracted to people of two genders (men and women, men and genderqueer, etc).

Demiromantic/Demisexual: A person who only experiences romantic (former) and/or sexual (latter) attraction for another person after forming an emotional bond with them.

Gay: A term used to describe a person who is attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender as themselves, and/or a male-identified person who is romantically and sexually attracted to other male-identified people. This is also a term sometimes used to generically mean LGBTQ, or folks who are attracted to others of the same sex and/or gender.

Grayromantic/Graysexual: A term generally covering the space between aromantic and romantic (former), and asexual and sexual (latter). However, it is more often used to identify folks who feel very little or rare romantic and/or sexual attraction. Sometimes also referred to as “gray-A” or “gray-ace.”

Gynoromantic/Gynosexual: A person who is romantically (former) and/or sexually (latter) attracted to women, females, and/or femininity. Typically used by monosexual folks who identify with a non-binary gender.

Heteroromantic/Heterosexual: A monosexual person who is romantically (former) and/or sexually (latter) attracted to people of a different sex and/or gender than their own.

Homoromantic/Homosexual: A monosexual person who is romantically (former) and/or sexually (latter) attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender as their own.

Lesbian: A female-identified person who is romantically and sexually attracted to other female-identified people.

Monosexual: A person who is attracted to people of only one sex and/or gender.

Omniromantic/Omnisexual: A term, generally interchangeable with pansexual, referring to the capacity for romantic (former) and/or sexual (latter) attraction to people of all genders and/or sexes.

Panromantic/Pansexual: A term used to describe a person who feels the capacity to experience romantic (former) and/or sexual (latter) attraction to people of all genders and/or sexes.

Polyromantic/Polysexual: A term used to describe a person who experiences romantic (former and/or sexual (latter) attraction to people of multiple, but not all genders and/or sexes. This term is also sometimes used as an umbrella term to describe all romantic or sexual orientations that encompass attraction to multiple genders and/or sexes such as biromanticism and pansexuality.

Queer: A reclaimed term used as a more inclusive, acronym-free descriptor of the LGBTQ community. Some people also use it to identify their sexual orientation to avoid the use of gender-specific labels.

Questioning: A person who is exploring their romantic and/or sexual orientation.

Skolioromantic/Skoliosexual: A person who is romantically (former) and/or sexually (latter) attracted to folks who are non-binary.

Important Terms to Know

Biphobia: The belief that biromantics/bisexuals or polyromantics/polysexuals do not exist, are closeted gays or lesbians, are identifying that way to be cool but are really straight, cannot make up their minds, are questioning, or are selfish/overly sexual. Biphobia comes both from within the LGBTQ community and from heterosexual society.

Closeted: A person who has not come out to themselves and/or others about their romantic and/or sexual orientation.

Coming Out: The process of self-acceptance as well as telling others about one's romantic and/or sexual orientation.

Heteronormativity: The automatic assumption that everyone is heterosexual. This leads to silencing and invisibility for non-heterosexual people.

Heterosexism: The legal, social, and institutional systems set up in our society that disenfranchise and oppress people who are non-heterosexual.

Homophobia: The fear, intolerance, resentment, or discomfort with people who are non-heterosexual or who are perceived as non-heterosexual. This can also connote fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as non-heterosexual. This can be expressed in body language (e.g. disgusted looks), verbal attacks (e.g. name calling), and physical assaults.

Outing: When someone reveals a person's romantic or sexual orientation to a person or a group of people without the person's consent.

Passing: A term used to describe trans people who are generally perceived to be heterosexual. This term is sometimes considered as a form of erasure. A better term might be "recognized."

Romantic Orientation: A person's romantic attraction to particular sexes and/or genders.

Sexual Behavior: Who a person is sexually active with. This may or may not be a person generally identified within their romantic or sexual orientation.

Sexual Orientation: A person's sexual attraction to particular sexes and/or genders.

Sexuality: A person's desires, identity, practices, and experiences around sex and attraction.

From the AVEN (Asexuality Visibility and Education Network) Wiki:

- **Primary Sexual Attraction:** A sexual attraction to people based on instantly available information (such as their appearance or smell) which may or may not lead to arousal or sexual desire.
- **Secondary Sexual Attraction:** A sexual attraction that develops over time based on a person's relationship and emotional connection with another person.
- **Primary Sexual Desire:** The desire to engage in sexual activity for the purposes of personal pleasure whether physical, emotional, or both.
- **Secondary Sexual Desire:** The desire to engage in sexual activity for the purposes other than personal pleasure, such as the happiness of the other person involved or the conception of children.

Sexual-ness*	Primary Attraction?	Secondary Attraction?	Primary Desire?	Secondary Desire?
Sexual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demisexual	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Asexual	No	No	No	Yes

*This is my edit, previously read "Sexual Orientation" which may be interpreted differently.