



# Rhys & Zackary's Fabulous Trans Primer

2017 edition

**TRANSGENDER or TRANS:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth. Trans people may identify with many different terms including transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, gender fluid, gender nonconforming, non-binary, and many others.

- ★ **Biological Sex:** is determined by chromosomes and other physical characteristics, and is assigned to a baby at birth. The sex you were assigned at birth may or may not be in line with how you identify and can be legally changed. Also, some people fall outside of the traditional biological definitions of male and female (see “intersex” below).
- ★ **Gender Identity:** Your gender identity refers to how you *feel*, who you know yourself to be; your identity as a man, a woman, or a gender nonconforming person.
- ★ **Gender Expression:** Your gender expression refers to what you *show* or *express* to the world around you. Because of discrimination, many trans people are not able to safely express their gender outwardly. So, it is possible to be a trans man identifying as a man, but still have a feminine gender expression because you don't feel safe expressing your gender in your local community.
- ★ Gender identity and sexuality are distinct. For example, if a trans woman is attracted exclusively to men, she may identify as straight; if she is attracted exclusively to women, she may identify as a lesbian or queer; or if she's attracted to people regardless of gender identity, she may identify as pansexual or bisexual. Like everyone, trans people identify across a spectrum of sexuality.
- ★ A trans person is identified as the gender they are now, not the gender they were assigned at birth. For instance, an *FTM* (female to male) trans person is referred to as a man (or as a trans man), because he currently identifies as a man.

**TRANSITION:** A trans person's “transition” refers to when they shift their outward gender expression to match their inner gender identity. A person can transition socially and/or medically: some trans people medically transition to align their bodies with their gender identity, while some do not. **A social transition** can include: coming out as trans, going by different pronouns, dressing in a way that reflects one's gender identity, changing one's name, etc. **A medical transition** can include hormone replacement therapy, surgery, and other physical treatments. Every person is different— some may seek certain changes and not others.

**CISGENDER (aka “cis”):** In Latin, cis means *on the same side of*, while trans means *on the other side of*. So a cisgender person is someone who identifies as (“on the same side of”) the gender they were assigned at birth. For example— if you were assigned male at birth and you identify as a man, then you are a cis man.

- ★ *Why say ‘cisgender’ instead of ‘non-transgender’ or ‘normal’?* Because, referring to cisgender people as ‘non trans’ or ‘normal’ implies that cisgender people are the default and that being trans is abnormal.

**INTERSEX:** refers to a variety of conditions in which a person is born with variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, gonads, or genitals that don't fit traditional definitions of biological female or male. Intersex conditions are more common than people think (nearly 1 in 100), occurring almost as often as redheads. Intersex conditions prove that, like most things in nature, gender exists on a biological spectrum.

**THE GENDER BINARY vs. THE GENDER SPECTRUM:** The gender binary refers to the social construct that gender is only made up of two categories, men and women. The gender binary is a restrictive idea that confines everyone to one of two gendered boxes and limits our ability to explore ourselves and our interests outside of cultural gender norms. The gender spectrum acknowledges that gender exists on a range of expression. The gender spectrum is a natural, foundational part of human expression, documented across cultures and recorded throughout history.

**NONBINARY or GENDER NONCONFORMING (GNC):** A few terms for people who don't identify as either men or women. Nonbinary/GNC people identify outside of the gender binary, and may incorporate any number of masculine or feminine traits into their gender expression. Nonbinary/GNC people often use gender neutral pronouns such as "they / them," (as opposed to "he" or "she") to more accurately reflect their gender identity. Other terms used by nonbinary/GNC folks include agender, genderqueer, and genderfluid.

**PRONOUNS:** Using the correct pronoun is critical when working with a trans person. In order to respect someone's gender identity, be sure to use the pronouns that they prefer. Using the incorrect pronouns to refer to a trans person is deeply disrespectful because it invalidates who they are. Imagine if you went to a friend's house for dinner and insisted on calling their husband "she" or calling their mom "he"? It would be rude, not to mention awkward. So when working with trans people, be 100% sure that you are using the correct pronouns. If you aren't sure what pronoun someone prefers, just ask!

**DRAG:** Drag kings / drag queens are performers who accentuate gender for the purpose of entertaining. Many drag performers identify as cisgender, though some identify as trans.

**CROSS-DRESSER:** Cross-dresser is somewhat an outdated term that refers to people who wear the clothing of the "opposite sex." Cross-dressers typically do not seek to live full-time as the opposite gender, and are often heterosexual men who wear feminine clothing part-time.

#### **DO's and DON'Ts:**

- ★ DO use the chosen name of a trans person. If someone introduces themselves as "Fantasia" but their driver's license says "Daniel," they are Fantasia to you always and forever.
- ★ DO ask people what pronouns they prefer. When in doubt, a simple, "Hey, what pronoun do you prefer?" is greatly appreciated by trans folks. If you're not yet sure of someone's pronoun, and they're not around for you to ask, you can also use a gender neutral pronoun like "they" for the time being.
- ★ DO use statements like "before he transitioned," or "prior to his transition," when referring to a trans person in the past. Avoid things like "when he was a she," "when he was still Sarah," or switching between pronouns in general. Stick with "he." Think about it like this: if you're talking about a trans man, he was always a man (or for a trans woman, she was always a woman) - it just wasn't always expressed externally. Additionally, don't say that a trans man was "born a woman," say that he was "assigned female at birth".
- ★ DO use words like "folks," "people," or "y'all," when addressing a group, in order to be more inclusive.
- ★ DON'T use the word "transgendered." No one gets "transgendered"— it's not a verb! The correct term is transgender, without the -ed on the end (the same goes for cisgender).
- ★ DON'T use the term "sex change," when discussing physical transition. Instead of "sex change" or "sex reassignment surgery," the term "gender confirmation surgery" is better because it focuses on "confirming" a trans person's gender identity rather than "changing" their physical sex.
- ★ DON'T out a trans person: if they haven't disclosed their trans identity publicly, it's not your place to do so.
- ★ DON'T use hate speech or derogatory language (i.e. "tranny," "ladyboy," "shemale," etc.).
- ★ DON'T ask a trans person what their birth name was.
- ★ DON'T ask a trans person about their genitals or surgery.