

Language Guide

Language to avoid. Language to use.



Avoid



Use

PERSON & IDENTITY

a project of the Ethics and Public Policy Center

Editor's note

One of our greatest challenges as editors has been language. The great Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper describes a twofold purpose of language. First, he says, “words convey reality. We speak in order to name and identify something that is real...” Second, we speak in order to name and identify something that is real for someone else, to communicate what we understand reality to be to another person. Pieper notes that when language is “disconnected from the roots of truth, in fact pursues some ulterior motives,...it invariably turns into an instrument of power.” This insight is key to understanding the “language wars” that surround the imposition of gender ideology. As legal scholar Jane Adolphe describes in chapter 6, from the 1990s on the word “gender” was used as part of an effort to smuggle LGBT and later SOGI rights into international agreements by stipulating that gender is a social construct. In fact, until the 1950’s the word “gender” was used to refer to grammatical constructions of nouns, rather than to indicate anything about the person. Popularized both by psychologists who were working with cross-sex identifying populations and by feminists who used the term “gender” to drive home their assertion that sexual difference was socially constructed, the word crept into common public discourse as a substitute for the word “sex.” For decades, most people assumed that gender was merely a synonym for sex.



Affirmed gender; affirmed sex
(asserted identity at odds with biological sex)

Desired identity; asserted identity; desired/asserted identity at odds with (or in contradiction to) biological sex

Affirmed puberty; correct puberty
(describing wished-for puberty of opposite sex)

Puberty (referring to natural male or female puberty); disrupted puberty (referring to suppression of natural pubertal development or hormonally-induced “masculinization or feminization” changes in appearance and disruption of sexual or reproductive functions); “Affirmed puberty” falsely implies that a person taking high-dose, cross-sex hormones (testosterone in females, estrogen in males) experiences the “puberty” of the opposite sex. *No one can undergo an opposite-sex puberty.* Puberty is a whole-body, sex-specific process leading to sexual reproductive maturity (capable of reproducing) and emotional, cognitive, and physical maturation. High doses of cross-sex hormones disable/impair a person’s natural sexual and reproductive functions, while inducing changes in appearance that mimic the opposite sex.

Assigned female at birth (AFAB)

Female or woman or girl

Assigned male at birth (AMAB)


Male or man or boy

Assigned sex

Sex; A person’s male or female sex is immutably determined at conception. Sex is a biological reality, not an arbitrary or “assigned” label.



Bottom surgery



Genital surgery, or surgery that amputates/alters/removes genitals or reproductive organs or constructs facsimile (non-functioning) genitals of the opposite sex for “**transition**” purposes; castration (male); Some gender clinics do “bottom surgeries” that destroy the natural anatomy and construct novel alternatives. Ex. “nullo” surgery (no external genitalia), “non-binary” surgery (not clearly male or female), and “penis-sparing vaginoplasty” (surgery retains male genitals and constructs a “neo-vagina”).

Binding

Taping or flattening breasts to mimic male chest

Cisgender (cisgender female, cisgender male)

Male or female; man or woman; boy or girl; “Cisgender” is a term invented to normalize “transgender” as one of two modes of existing, creating a new binary (“cisgender” or “transgender”) instead of male and female. It is based on the false anthropological premise that it is as natural and healthy for a person to *reject* the body and male or female identity as it is to *accept* it.

Coming Out

Publicly expressing same-sex attraction or transgender identification; The underlying, erroneous premise is that a person’s identity is defined by sexual attractions or identity feelings and that by “coming out” the person has accepted this “identity” and seeks to declare it publicly (and receive affirmation from others).



Cisnormative; cisnormativity

The truth about the human person; Sound beliefs or practices regarding the human person, based on the reality of human nature, sexual difference, and the immutability of sex; Gender activists use “cisnormative/cisnormativity” as a slur or pejorative description of beliefs, groups, or cultural practices that consider it normal, healthy, and good for people to embrace their given sexual identity as male or female, and to organize society around this view. Activists claim that “cisnormative” views, which reject transgender identification, are biased, bigoted, and oppressive.

Deadname

Name; given name; The transgender-identified person rejects his or her given sexual identity as male or female and typically rejects the name received at birth as a “deadname,” and replaces it with a chosen name to match the newly invented “identity.”

Dysphoria

Distress; discomfort; emotional pain or distress; unpleasant feelings.

Dysphoric
(general feeling or related to specific body parts)

Distressed; experiencing discomfort, anxiety, or negative feelings about one’s body or sexual identity (male or female); Transgender-identified persons may describe any negative feelings evoked by the sexed body or one’s sexual identity (male or female) as “dysphoric” feelings. This descriptive label is not equivalent to the clinical diagnosis ([DSM-5-TR](#)) of “gender dysphoria.” Labeling negative feelings as “dysphoric” often leads to the presumption that the person “is” transgender and needs “transition” to resolve the negative feelings.



Gay; lesbian; bisexual



Person who is same-sex attracted or experiencing same-sex attraction, or a person who experiences sexual attraction to both sexes

Gender
(identity category)

Male or female or sexual identity; sexual difference, biological sex; “Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his [or her] sexual identity. Physical moral and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life” ([Catholic Catechism 2333](#)). Gender ideology defines “gender” and “gender identity” to mean a person’s self-determined “identity,” regardless of the person’s sex; this view is irreconcilable with the truth of the person. Consequently, Catholics should not use “gender” or “gender identity” to describe the truth of the person (or to refer to sex, identity, male, female, or sexual difference).

Gender
(social role or attribute)

Masculine (masculinity) or feminine (femininity); (context dependent) social role or social expectations or sex stereotypes; The Catholic Church has described “gender” as the “socio-cultural role of sex,” provided “gender” is “distinguished but not separated” from sex ([Amoris Laetitia](#), 56). However, in the U.S. and UN context, because “gender” is subjective and severed from sex, it should not be used.

Gender affirming; gender affirmation

Sex denying; sex rejecting; body rejecting; affirming self-hatred, affirming self-harm, or affirming a false belief or self-perception; Catholic teaching affirms the dignity and value of every person. Affirming a person’s “gender” or “gender identity” affirms the person’s rejection of his or her given sexual identity, and affirms the person’s self-hatred or rejection of the sexed body.



Gender-affirming care (GAC)

Hormonal or surgical body modifications or sex-rejecting interventions; psychosocial, medical, and surgical interventions to validate/affirm the person's rejection of his (male) or her (female) sexual identity; Like abortion, GAC is neither "care" nor treatment, because it has no therapeutic value and causes harm. GAC is iatrogenic (causing harm in a healthy body) and is undertaken to validate the person's false beliefs ("born in the wrong body") or asserted identity ("transgender," "queer"), contrary to the person's sex (male or female).

Gender-affirming hormones

High-dose, cross-sex hormones (testosterone to females, estrogen and anti-androgens to males); supra-physiological doses of sex hormones that cause harm, disrupt the body's normal sexual and reproductive functions, and alter appearance; Both sexes produce both hormones (testosterone and estrogen), but in radically different amounts. High doses of cross-sex hormones cannot change the person's sex but do induce physical changes characteristic of the opposite sex, while also impairing fertility and sexual function.

Gender binary


Sex binary; male and female sex; sexual difference; sexual dimorphism

Gender congruence
(general)

Identity integration; alignment of sexual identity and biological sex; alignment of feelings and body; body and mind in sync; The human person, as a unity of body and soul, should reflect an integrated identity, where the person's feelings and sense of self align with biological reality (being male or female).



Gender congruence
(goal of transgender identification)



Rejection of the sexed body or rejection of one's male or female sexual identity; Transgender identification responds to the mismatch of self-perception and the sexed body by seeking to change the body to match the mind (“gender congruence”) or to change public presentation/appearance to align with asserted identity, not the sexed body or given sexual identity (male or female).

Gender incongruence

Discomfort/distress because of one's sex (male or female) or sexed body; identity-or body-related confusion or distress; a mismatch between self-perceived “identity” and the reality of one's sex or sexed body; feeling uncomfortable “in my own skin”; “Gender incongruence” is used generally, as described above, or as a diagnostic term in the WHO International Classification of Diseases and the APA Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Gender diverse; gender diversity
(umbrella term)

A person who rejects his or her given sexual identity (male or female) or groups characterized by their rejection of innate sexual difference (male or female); the ideological belief that rejects the truth that humans are either male or female; the ideological belief that humans exist on a spectrum of self-determined identities, neither integrated with nor limited by biological sex

Gender dysphoria*; gender dysphoric

Identity or body-related distress; feeling uncomfortable in one's own skin; *Use of the term gender dysphoria may be required in some contexts, as it is a compromise mental health diagnosis, resulting from the American Psychiatric Association's substitution of “gender dysphoria” for “gender identity disorder.” The compromise claims transgender identification is normal while retaining the dysphoria diagnosis to justify insurance coverage for desired medical interventions.



Gender dysphoria* (continued)

*“Gender dysphoria” is self-diagnosed by subjective feelings and non-conformity with sex stereotypes ([DSM-5-TR](#)) and is too easily applied to not-uncommon experiences of Identity or body-related distress in puberty, possibly obscuring underlying issues. Because “gender dysphoria” is linked to transgender identification, vulnerable persons may believe their distress (“gender dysphoria”) is resolvable only by hormonal or surgical interventions.

Gender identity
(ideological concept)

Self-perception or self-determined identity, different from the person’s male or female sex; identity feelings, or self-perceived identity, different from the person’s male or female sex; The expression of a “gender identity” different from the person’s male or female sex is a fundamental rejection of one’s given sexual identity as male or female.

Gender identity
(mistaken term for identity)

Sexual identity; identity; Every person must “acknowledge and accept his [or her] sexual identity” (male or female) as a gift from God ([CCC 2223](#)).

Any alternative gender identity
(e.g., agender, pangender, genderqueer, etc.)

A person who identifies as....; A chosen or alternative “gender identity” does not reflect the truth about the person. Every person is created either male or female, a fact which cannot be changed by a person’s feelings or self-perception.

Gender roles, gender norms

Social or cultural expectations for males and females; norms related to femininity and masculinity



Gender transition;
gender transitioning interventions/procedures



To present oneself as the opposite sex or to claim an identity different from one's sex (male or female); changing one's appearance, name, pronouns, etc., or attempting to alter the body to express an "identity" different from one's sex; A "gender transition" may include body modification interventions (chemical, surgical, or other means) that 1) alter the outward appearance of the person to appear less like one's given sex (male or female) or more like the opposite sex; 2) intentionally impair the person's healthy sexual and reproductive functions, or 3) alter the person's secondary sex characteristics or create pseudo-genitals that mimic those of the opposite sex, in order to express a self-determined ("transgender") identity different from one's sex (male or female).

Heteronormative; heteronormativity

God's design for human sexuality; the natural attraction of males and females for each other; the truth that males and females are ordered towards sexual union with the opposite sex; a union designed to generate new life; "Heteronormative" is an ideological term premised on a false anthropology. It frames the truth that males and females are designed for sexual union with one another (sexual complementarity) as bigoted and oppressive.

Intersex

Disorder of Sexual Development (DSD); disorder of male sexual development or female sexual development

LGBTQ

Persons who identify as...; A Christian's fundamental identity is relational: each person is either a son or daughter of God.



Misgender

Using correct (sex-based) pronouns and names; declining to use chosen pronouns or a name if they contradict the person's given sex (male or female); To accuse a speaker of "misgendering" is to (falsely) accuse the speaker of being bigoted, offensive, or "invalidating" a person's "transgender" identity. Pronouns reflect the objective truth that each person is immutably male or female from the moment of conception.

Non-binary

Person who identifies as non-binary; a person who rejects his or her given sex and asserts an alternative identity claiming to be neither male nor female; No one "is" non-binary. Every person is either male or female, from conception, regardless of feelings, self-perception, or (non) conformity with sex stereotypes.

Outing (of children and adolescents)

Keeping parents informed; informing parents when a child expresses same-sex attraction, rejects his or her sexual identity (male or female), or asserts an alternative identity

Sex assigned at birth

Sex, natal sex, or given sex; male or female sex; sex *observed* at birth (determined at conception); biological sex; A person's male or female sex is immutably determined at conception. Thus, sex is a biological reality, not an arbitrary or "assigned" label.



Sex change

Medical or surgical body modifications; hormonal or surgical interventions that disable or disrupt the healthy function of the sexed body, particularly sexual/reproductive functions; attempting to medically or surgically transform the body to appear less like one's given sex (male or female) or more like the opposite sex; A person's sex cannot change. Medical and surgical interventions that attempt to transform the body of a transgender-identified person produce cosmetic changes and cause iatrogenic harm.

Top surgery
(gender transition)

Double mastectomy of healthy breasts; amputation of healthy breasts; double mastectomy on a healthy female to validate an asserted "transgender" identity or to mimic a flat-chested male appearance; removal or amputation of healthy breasts for "gender transition" purposes; breast implants (on males) so as to mimic a female appearance or to validate an asserted "transgender" identity

Transgender

Person who identifies as transgender; transgender-identifying person; person who asserts an identity different from the person's sex or who rejects his or her sexual identity as male or female

Trans kid (trans kids)

Child or boy or girl; child who identifies as transgender; child experiencing identity or body-related distress; child who asserts an identity at odds with biological sex



Transman; transboy

Trans person; trans people

Transwoman; transgirl

Tucking

Queer (verb), Queer (adjective)



Female who identifies as a man or boy

Person (people); person who identifies as transgender; person experiencing identity-related or body-related distress; person who asserts an identity at odds with biological sex

Male who identifies as woman or girl

Taping or compressing male genitals to mimic a female appearance

To subvert the truth; to contradict or transgress moral and cultural boundaries related to sex; a belief system that rejects objective truth, human nature, moral norms, traditional family structures, and the sexed body as oppressive; Queer theory is central to gender ideology: it rejects God as Creator and claims that the individual can self-determine an identity regardless of biological sex.