



Do's and Don'ts

Assumptions / Stereotypes

- Don't assume that LGBT persons are more open to discussing sex
- Don't use language that sexualizes LGBT persons
- Do treat LGBT persons the same as anyone else
- Do understand that an individual's LGBT status is only a very small part of who they are
- Do not assume that LGBT individuals 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"
- Do include the entire LGBT 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 LGBT person's significant other as "your special friend"
- Do follow the LGBT'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
- Don't refer to someone as "changing" their gender
- Do ask people what terms they feel comfortable with



HOW TO BE AN ALLY

PROGRAM TOOLKIT

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 relationship and you are inquiring about whether person has a significant other, use that term or other open, inclusive, gender neutral terms
- Try to resist tendency to bring up LGBT topics (ie. "gays I have known") immediately after someone discloses in one way or another their LGBT status or frequently when you are speaking with LGBT folks
- Don't comment on whether or not an individual looks gay, transgender, etc. – LGBT individuals are all different
- Don't ask questions about personal medical issues (e.g., "Have you had "the surgery"")
- Don't ask about genitals (e.g., "What's in your trousers")
- Do listen, and take your cue from the LGBT person regarding what they do and don't want to share or talk about
- Do not mistakenly "out" a person as LGBT (for example, by talking about them, or assuming that others know)
- Don't ask others if you think someone else is gay
- Do be supportive but don't over-compensate
- Do talk about the same things you would talk about with anyone else – the weather, sports, hobbies, etc.
- Don't limit conversation with LGBT individuals to LGBT 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," thus demeaning their stature as being female or male
- Do apologize if you make a mistake, and then move on

Awareness

- Do understand that transgender individuals are not necessarily gay, lesbian or bisexual
- Do understand that LGBT youth may be particularly vulnerable and sensitive



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 female/male 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 in forms, applications, etc. if you don't need it.
- Don't say "ladies and gentleman" since you exclude people who don't strongly identify with either
- Do open events to both 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 try to guess someone's pronoun
- 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



Bathrooms

- Don't police people's bathroom choices

Support

- Do be affirming and let your LGBT 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 LGBT individual
- Do encourage employment of LGBT persons
- Do speak out and express your objection if someone else is making stereotypical and/or offensive jokes or statements about LGBT persons 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 LGBT inclusion
- Do give money to LGBT organizations
- Do get training and education on LGBT issues, no matter how much you think you know already
- Do spend time with members of the LGBT community
- Do join LGBT organizations
- Do include younger persons in your efforts to be an ally as they are often more inclusive and aware of LGBT issues
- SEE ITEMS IN SOGI BEST PRACTICES MANUAL

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"

Resources for more ideas

- GLAD materials on gay youth in the courts
- The Genderbread person as a diagram or giveaway
- Williams Institute
- Safe Zone manuals