

LGBTI+ Inclusion & Language Guide

Practical vocabulary & inclusive communication in early childhood settings

Cisgender	A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.
Transgender	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth.
Non-Binary	An umbrella term for identities that sit outside the binary concept of strictly male or female.
Demigirl	A person who identifies partially, but not wholly, with being a girl or female, regardless of assigned sex.
Demiboy	A person who identifies partially, but not wholly, with being a boy or male, regardless of assigned sex.
Genderfluid	Refers to a gender identity that shifts and changes over time, rather than remaining fixed.
Agender	Refers to a person who identifies as not having a gender identity, or as gender-neutral.
Lesbian	A woman or feminine-aligned person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.
Gay	A person who is attracted to people of the same gender; commonly used for men attracted to men.
Bisexual / Pansexual	Attraction to more than one gender (Bisexual), or attraction to people regardless of gender (Pansexual).
Ace (Asexual)	An umbrella term for people who experience little to no sexual attraction to others.
Aro (Aromantic)	An umbrella term for people who experience little to no romantic attraction to others.
Demisexual	Experiencing sexual attraction only after forming a deep emotional or personal bond with someone.
Brotherboy & Sistergirl	Terms used in First Nations Australian communities for gender-diverse people (Brotherboy: culturally male with female body; Sistergirl: culturally female with male body).
Intersex	People born with biological sex traits (chromosomes, hormones, or anatomy) that don't fit typical male or female medical definitions.
Queer	An umbrella term reclaimed by many in the community to describe diverse sexualities and gender identities.
Ally	A person who actively supports and advocates for LGBTI+ individuals and inclusion.
Affirming Space	An environment where a person's identity is recognized, respected, and validated through intentional language.
Misgendering	Referring to someone using terms, pronouns, or gendered assumptions that do not align with their identity.
Deadnaming	Using a person's birth name (or former name) after they have chosen a name that reflects their true identity.
Pronouns	Words used to refer to someone without using their name (e.g., she/her, he/him, they/them, ze/zir).

Inclusive Language Swap Guide

Instead of (Binary / Gendered)...	Try Using (Inclusive)...	Why It Makes a Difference
"Boys and girls", "Ladies and gentlemen"	"Friends", "Learners", "Everyone", "Kooris"	Avoids dividing children by gender; creates unified group belonging.
"Mums and dads" (when addressing families)	"Parents and carers", "Grown-ups", "Families"	Includes diverse family structures (same-sex parents, grandparents, foster carers).
"He's a strong boy", "She's a pretty girl"	"You worked so hard!", "Look at that creativity!"	Prevents implicit gender stereotyping and focuses praise on effort and skill.
"Is that a boy bug or a girl bug?"	"What an interesting creature! Look at its colors."	Removes binary assumptions from nature and play materials.

Pronoun Usage & Micro-Skills Cheat Sheet

The They/Them Singular Pronoun: Used when a person doesn't identify as strictly male or female, or when gender is unknown.
Example: "Sam brought their favorite book today. They are going to read it."

The Correction Rule: If you accidentally misgender someone: "She—sorry, they—left their bag in the cubby." Self-correct then move on calmly without making your apology into a big deal).

A Note for Parents & Carers: It is completely normal to have questions about how children explore who they are. In early childhood, children naturally explore roles, dress-up, and friendships. Understanding the clear differences between biological sex, gender identity, and sexuality helps us create safe, loving environments where every child thrives.

1. Biological Sex (The Body)

- **What it is:** The physical traits we are born with—such as anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones.
- **Assigned at Birth:** Doctors assign 'male' or 'female' based on physical appearance. Some babies are born with intersex variations that don't fit neatly into either category.
- **Early Childhood Context:** Biological sex is about the physical body. It does not dictate what toys a child will enjoy, how they express themselves, or who they will grow up to be.

2. Gender Identity & Expression (The Heart & Mind)

- **What it is:** A person's deeply felt internal sense of being a boy, a girl, both, or neither (Gender Identity), and how they show it through clothing, hair, or play (Gender Expression).
- **How Kids Experience It:** Around ages 2–4, children begin recognizing gender concepts. Exploring dress-up, nail polish, or gendered role-play is a healthy, normal part of child development.
- **Parent Takeaway:** Supporting a child's choices in play and clothing builds strong emotional resilience and self-esteem.

3. Sexuality & Romantic Attraction (The Heart's Attraction)

- **What it is:** Who a person is romantically or emotionally attracted to (e.g., gay, lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual).
- **In Early Childhood:** Sexuality is NOT relevant in early childhood settings. Early childhood inclusion focuses entirely on family structures (e.g., having two mums or two dads) and ensuring every family feels welcome.
- **Parent Takeaway:** Talking about diverse families teaches children kindness, empathy, and respect for all people.

Summary for Families: Children thrive when they are allowed to explore their interests safely, know their family is respected, and see that all people deserve care and inclusion regardless of their gender, sex, sexuality, race, and culture. Diversity can always place individuals at risk of discrimination which can in turn harm mental health, however there is a strong body of research showing that strong family support dramatically improves the mental health outcomes of sexually and gender diverse children.