

Important points

- It is up to you to decide your sexual orientation and gender identity.
- No one knows how you feel and there is no wrong or right way to feel.
- There is no rush to decide on any of these things, you are also allowed to change your mind.
- If you are worried about offending someone by using the wrong pronoun (words that you use to refer to someone else like 'he' or 'she') then ask them politely what they would prefer.

What should I do about my questions?

There are lots of different organisations that work with young people who have questions about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Often these organisations say they support 'LGBTQ' individuals and work to tackle stigma and unkindness about differences in gender and sexuality. Here are a few organisations and their websites that might be helpful or interesting to you:

www.youngstonewall.org.uk

<http://lgbt.foundation/get-support/for-young-people/resources>

This leaflet has been informed by the website
www.youngstonewall.org.uk

Contact

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Emotional Health Service



LGBTQ

Information for young people

Sexual orientation

The feelings that you have for someone you fancy, want to date or be in a relationship with are described as your sexual identity. Some people know their sexual orientation from a young age and others take a while to figure it out. It's a personal journey and there's no rush to decide.

Here are some words commonly use to describe genders.

- **Lesbian:** if you are a girl who fancies girls (some people also call this gay).
- **Gay:** if you are a boy who fancies boys or a girl who fancies girls.
- **Bisexual:** you fancy people who are a different gender to you or the same gender.
- **Queer:** some people use this to define themselves if they are not straight (but some people find this an offensive term).
- **Straight:** when you are a girl who fancies boys or a boy who fancies girls.
- **Asexual:** when you don't fancy other people at all.
- **Pansexual:** when you fancy people of any gender or people who don't choose to define their gender.

These labels might not describe everyone, but they are a simple way of explaining different sexual orientations.

No one can change who they fancy, sexual orientation is a part of who we are. You can't tell someone's sexual orientation by looking at them, only you know how you feel. We don't know what causes sexual orientations, in some ways they're still a bit of a mystery.

Gender identity

Your feelings about whether you are a girl or a boy describe your gender identity. Everyone has a gender identity, but only individuals know what theirs is, again, only you know how you feel. Some people believe that gender is best described as a spectrum and that people shouldn't have to decide whether they are a girl or a boy.

People are told their gender identity at birth, but sometimes this doesn't feel right for them. They may feel that they would be more comfortable with a different gender identity. This is completely fine as it is up to you to figure out what works for you.

There are lots of different words and phrases that people use to talk about gender identity that can make it quite confusing. Here are a few explained.

- **Gender expression:** the way you show your gender, for example, some people show that they feel like a girl by dressing in clothes other people think are for girls.
- **Gender dysphoria:** when someone feels the gender they were given at birth doesn't fit with who they really are, for example, if someone is told that they are a boy at birth (because they have male genitalia), but they feel this isn't quite right.
- **Transitioning or transition:** if someone wishes to change their gender identity they may 'transition' which is a process that looks different for everyone and can happen in lots of different ways.
- **Trans or transgender:** if your gender identity or expression is different to the one assigned to you at birth.
- **Cis:** if your gender identity or expression matches the one assigned to you at birth.
- **Non-binary or gender queer:** someone who doesn't choose to identify as a girl or a boy (they may feel like both sometimes or swap between them).