

TRANS
MEDIA WATCH
Accuracy - Dignity - Respect
transmediawatch.org.uk

MEDIA STYLE GUIDE

Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998 states

“Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.”

Being trans does not negate a person’s right to privacy any more than race, disability or any other such naturally occurring characteristic.


Just as some people are black, gay or left-handed, some people are trans.


Trans people do not choose to be trans. Very often they try hard to choose not to be trans.


TOP TIP


If you don’t know how to describe somebody, ask them. If you can’t ask, use pronouns and gendered descriptors which most closely match their presentation.


9 simple guidelines to help you get trans issues right first time


Avoid the use of language which is widely considered to be offensive to trans people, eg. sex swap, sex change, tranny, pre-op, shemale 


Avoid referencing the medical histories of trans people except when directly relevant to the subject of a media item and then only with the permission of any individual concerned 


Avoid sensationalist reference to trans people or issues especially where their gender history has no direct bearing on the subject at hand 


Avoid gratuitous descriptions, comments or references that ridicule people on the grounds of their trans status 

Avoid using pronouns and gendered descriptions that conflict with an individual's personal experience of their gender identity 

Avoid revealing the previous names or identity (including photographs) of trans people except where their express permission is given 

As with anybody else, trans people can be gay, lesbian, straight or bisexual. **There is no automatic link between gender identity and sexuality** and the two should not be confused 

Remember that people who have only recently revealed themselves as trans or started transition may be vulnerable, isolated from social support and unaware of their rights 

Take particular care in dealing with subjects involving trans children. They require the same sensitivity that would be shown to any child 

As with the sexual orientation of gay men and lesbian women, most trans people dislike being defined solely by how they differ from a perceived social norm. We suggest it is always best to respect the wishes of the individual being described before using the following terms:

Widely recognised terminology



Language surrounding trans issues has become unnecessarily complicated and is often inappropriately focused on intimate medical detail. We suggest that, except in a piece of specialist interest or where an individual specifically wishes to differentiate their gender identity further, **there should seldom be any reason to use terminology other than that listed in this panel.**

Trans (adj) is an umbrella term, describing people who experience the need to present themselves as and/or who identify as other than the gender they were assigned at birth. This term is usually perfectly adequate where such a term is relevant.

Transgender (adj) may still be useful when your readership or audience may be unfamiliar with the term trans.

Transition describes the process of changing gender presentation. This may involve social, medical and surgical change — though not necessarily all three. Paying due regard to the privacy of medical detail, 'transition' should prove an adequate descriptor in most places where these changes are relevant. The target gender should always be used when describing transition, eg. John is transitioning from female to male..

A trans man has transitioned or is transitioning from female to male; a trans woman, from male to female.

Gender Variance is increasingly used to describe all variation from expected gender norms. While many trans people are content to describe themselves as either male or female, this term acknowledges that others experience their gender as more biologically and socially diverse than is often assumed.

Terms also Used



Transsexual (adj) describes a person who wishes to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone transition. Though not all those who identify as transsexual undergo medical therapy, 'transsexual' is considered most appropriate when used in relation to clinical practice.

Transsexualism (noun)

Gender dysphoria is a medical diagnosis describing the distress of an individual who experiences incongruence between their gender identity and their apparent physical sex. It is also used when an individual feels unable to present in the gender role which feels appropriate to them but is not the one commonly expected by their society.

Gender affirmation surgery (sometimes gender confirmation surgery) describes any surgery which may accompany transition. As with all medical therapy, these are private matters between an individual and their doctor and should never be referred to without permission.

Transvestite (adj, occ. noun) (sometimes crossdresser) describes a person who wears the clothing attributed to a gender different to the one they were assigned at birth, but does not usually experience the requirement to live permanently in that gender role.

Drag queen / king is a person whose presentation (in clothing associated with a gender different to the one they were assigned at birth) is typically performance led.

Intersex (adj) describes an individual in whom genetic, hormonal and physical features that may be thought typical of both male and female exist. They may be thought of as being male with female features, female with male features or may have no clearly defined sexual features.

It is not the intention of Trans Media Watch to censor language. Negative connotations acquired by an idiom may be the result of misunderstanding, lack of awareness or — sadly, all too often — derogatory intent both in sections of the media and in common parlance.

Words occasionally used within the trans communities may be unacceptable outside them. As with our knowledge and understanding of gender variance, language relating to gender is constantly evolving.

Terminology used in UK law and medicine:



Many trans and intersex people consider these terms inappropriate:

- Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)
- Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS)
- Gender Identity Disorder (GID)
- Disorders of Sexual Development (DSD)

Terms which many trans people find offensive:



- Sex change
- Sex swap
- Tranny (may be considered analogous to 'paki' or 'dyke')
- Transsexual (when used as a noun)
- Transgender (when used as a noun)
- Pre-op / Post-op (it is wholly unacceptable to define a person by surgical status)
- Shemale
- HeShe
- Gender-Bender (specifically when used in relation to a transitioning person as opposed to an individual who experiments with their gender presentation)
- Hermaphrodite (should never be applied to human beings, intersex is the preferred term)

Inaccurate Usage



- Transsexuality — the correct medical term, where appropriate, is transsexualism
- Transgendered — not a synonym for transgender, analogous to 'womaned' or 'Jewed'
- Gender identity confusion
- Gender dysmorphia
- Gender realignment
- Born a man (or woman) — people are born babies
- Undergoing surgery "to become a man" (or woman)

Transitioning people commonly identify as their target gender from childhood. Surgery may help affirm but does not change a person's gender identity. 'Transitioning' is generally a preferable way to describe this process.

Trapped in the wrong body — while some trans people find this well-worn phrase apt, others feel it oversimplifies a more nuanced experience. Please take care not to put words into the mouths of trans people and allow them to speak for themselves.

Cisgender is a term increasingly used to describe those people who are not trans in the same way as 'heterosexual' means 'not homosexual'. It's worth noting that the word heterosexual did not exist before 1890 and did not enter common usage until the 1960s.



For more comprehensive guidance and explanation of terminology, please refer to:

website <http://www.transmediawatch.org>

email info@transmediawatch.org