



This glossary is an alphabetical definition list.

It is a work in progress, and largely includes words that people have asked about at meetups.

Ace (n, adj):

- Short-form (slang) for everyone on the asexual spectrum, including diverse asexual spectrum identities (e.g., including grey-As and demisexuals)

Note: Non-English language communities sometimes use “ace” but it doesn't work as well

Agender (adj):

- identify or umbrella term for not having a gender identity or identifying with no gender or ungendered, etc.

Allosexual (adj; n):

- see “zedsexual”

Amatonormativity (n):

- the normative privileging / prioritising of romantic relationships above all other kinds of relationships-- the social force treating romance as intrinsically superior to, or more intimate and important than other kinds of relationships, or as the more “normal” way to do primary relationships and to organise families
- devalues friendships and other important platonic relationships
- names how (within cultural contexts where marriage is linked with romantic love), romantic relationships are seen as the bedrock of the nuclear family (i.e., the main “consumer unit” in a capitalist society), and are privileged by governments and society with legal and social recognition, acceptance and rights
- tied in with heteronormativity

Androgynous (adj):

- identity or umbrella term for a kind of non-binary gender implying some combination of conventionally “m” and “f” aspects
- older word than many of the other gender-related terms and carries different meanings in different contexts

Aromantic (and aromantic spectrum— “arospec”):

- people who experience little to no romantic attraction and/or desire to pursue romantic relationships
- there is a diverse aromantic spectrum with many arospec identities like demiromantic and grey-romantic/grey-aromantic

Asexuality:

- a sexual orientation or identity describing people who experience little or no sexual attraction (and/or sexual desire for sexual contact with others... and/or interest in participating in sexual relationships or sex)
 - asexuality is diverse and no single definition or criterion will work for everyone

Asexual spectrum / umbrella (e.g., people “on the asexual spectrum” or “under the asexual umbrella”)

- spectrum of “asexuality” experiences, and/or the broad collection of asexual/ace community identities
- includes people who identify as “asexual” and those in the “grey zone” (e.g., greyasexuals who might experience some degree of sexual attraction in some circumstances & demisexuals who might experience sexual attraction only after forming a meaningful emotional connection)

AVEN (Asexual Visibility & Education Network):

- AVEN is the largest and most well-known (online) asexual community—massive ace community hub
- (co-)founded in 2001 by David Jay, it was crucial in forming the ace community as we know it today



Biromantic (adj):

- experiencing romantic attraction toward people of at least two genders

Bisexual (adj):

1. sexual orientation describing people who are emotionally, sexually, romantically, etc. attracted to (and/or potentially interested in forming intimate romantic/sexual relationships with) people of at least two genders
2. experiencing sexual (but not necessarily romantic) attraction toward people of at least two genders (particularly in the context of someone who might also have a non-biromantic romantic orientation)

Cis (cisgender) (adj):

- someone whose gender identity straightforwardly matches the gender they were assigned at birth

Ciscentrism (n):

- a sum total of social expectations and ideologies, institutions, practices, etc. that treat being "cis" as the default or the "norm" or superior way of being, or as not requiring an explanation, while assuming that trans and other non-cis experiences do require an explanation

Cissexual (adj):

- someone whose sense of their own body matches the gender or sex assigned at birth
- often used interchangeably with cisgender but there are complicated politics behind why people would or would not do that or what it means to use the two interchangeably re: transmedicalism (e.g., defining "trans" strictly according to sex dysphoria and medical definitions) & policing trans identities
 - Using "cisgender" (and not using "cissexual") is more friendly to trans and/or non-binary people who do not necessarily have body dysphoria or do want to change their bodies

Compulsory Heterosexuality (n):

- the patriarchal presumption that heterosexuality is the normal and necessary default for everyone
- imposes a "heterosexual lens" on all individuals throughout all aspects of life, beginning in early childhood
- This system imposes the coercive violence of homophobia and heterosexism in order to "make people" be straight (or try to be straight, regardless of personal feelings).

Note: The term became popular after Adrienne Rich's 1980 essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Existence" which focused on women's experiences.

Compulsory Sexuality (n):

Compulsory sexuality is the set of social expectations, ideologies, institutions and practices, etc. that hold that:

- all ("legitimate") people should desire and have sex (and especially sex of the "right kind")
- having and wanting to have sex is a form of personal empowerment
- participation in sex is an expected and required part of a (fulfilling) romantic relationship, which undermines consent (e.g., you might be able to say "no" initially— to delay sex until the relationship reaches a certain level of commitment or marriage— or to say "no" on occasion generally, but you can't say "no" forever)

Compulsory sexuality plays out in specific intersectional ways and is related to compulsory heterosexuality. It doesn't mean "everyone must have sex now!". **Compulsory sexuality means that everyone is "required" to do the sexuality that is "socially appropriate / expected for them"** (whatever that means for their context).

- **Note:** While "compulsory sexuality" is a relatively new term, Black feminists were naming and opposing the simultaneously sexist, racist and classist violence of forced sexualisation & rape specifically targeting Black women (in the US) decades before ace communities existed (e.g., the Combahee River Collective Statement of 1978).



Demisexual (n, adj):

- people who only experience sexual (romantic) attraction after forming (strong) emotional connections (which may or may not be romantic); possibly after an extended period of time
- typically considered a “grey” or “grey-asexual” identity
- often abbreviated as “demi”

Demiromantic (n, adj):

- people who only experience romantic attraction after forming emotional connections (not necessarily within a romantic context; possibly after an extended period of time)
- typically considered a “greyromantic” identity
- rarely abbreviated as “demi” (usually “demi” means “demisexual” but it can depend on context)

Gender binary (n):

- the social system where there are exactly 2 genders (men and women) defined in opposition to each other
 - ties masculinity and maleness to men and femininity and femaleness to women
- the gender binary is not universal, and for many cultures the imposition of the gender binary was an act of colonial violence by Europe (and Britain) and the US

Genderqueer (abbreviated GQ) (adj):

- umbrella term for gender identities and gender expressions that “queer” the gender binary
- sometimes a specific identity
- much overlap with “non-binary” but different in scope and implication (the two are *not* interchangeable)

Grey-asexual or greysexual (n, adj):

- people who identify somewhere on the asexual spectrum, who experience sexual attraction rarely, weakly, or only in specific circumstances (abbreviated as grey-A or sometimes grace)
- grey-asexual and greysexual are not interchangeable, and may communicate different relationships to asexuality and/or sexuality

Grey-romantic or grey-aromantic (n, adj):

- people who identify somewhere on the aromantic spectrum, who experience romantic attraction rarely or only in certain circumstances, or maybe have difficulty distinguishing romantic vs. other attractions, etc.

Heteronormativity (n):

- the culmination of compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia and heterosexism
- the system of power that privileges heterosexuality, heterosexual romantic-sexual love and/or marriage as normal and necessary
- structures society around the (heterosexual) “nuclear family” as the basic “consumer unit” under capitalism
- constitutes and enforces the socially constructed gender binary system

Heterosexism (n):

- normative privileging of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships
- the presumption of heterosexuality as the taken-for-granted “ideal” while implicitly or explicitly devaluing other ways of being or doing relationships
- used as a tool of compulsory heterosexuality, as part of the larger system of heteronormativity



Homonormativity (n):

- the social pressure to “assimilate” into heteronormative society and to become the ideal of the “mainstream gay” or “respectable queer”
- the approach of broadening heteronormative institutions very slightly to integrate (some) LGBTQ+ people, instead of fundamentally challenging those institutions— upholding heteronormative social structures like nuclear families, the gender binary and gender roles, etc.

Note: Recognising homonormativity highlights how white privilege, capitalism, sexism, transmisogyny and cissexism affect who is “socially acceptable” and who is often left out of conversations.

Monogamy (n):

- Monogamy is a relationship structure where romantic/sexual relationships have two partners and these partners are expected to receive all romantic/sexual and/or intimacy needs solely from each other.

Non-binary or nonbinary (abbreviated as nb or enby) (adj):

- umbrella term for gender identities that do not fit neatly within the man-woman gender binary system
 - some non-binary genders are culturally specific
- sometimes a specific gender identity

Non-mongamy (n):

- see polyamory

Open relationships (n):

- a romantic and/or sexual relationship where the participants agree that it's okay for them to have (particular kinds of) romantic and/or sexual contact with other people

Panromantic (adj):

- experiencing romantic attraction toward people of all genders or to people regardless of gender

Pansexual (adj):

1. sexual orientation describing people who are emotionally, sexually, romantically, etc. attracted to (and/or potentially interested in forming intimate romantic/sexual relationships with) people of all genders or to people regardless of gender
2. experiencing sexual (but not necessarily romantic) attraction toward people of all genders or to people regardless of gender (particularly in the context of someone with a non-pan romantic orientation)

Polyamorous (or “poly”) (adj):

- desiring or being open to having multiple romantic and/or sexual relationships with people simultaneously (who all know about and consent to this situation)
- an approach to intimate (typically romantic and/or sexual) relationships based on the (consensual) rejection of monogamous relationship structures and norms

Polyamory (n):

- an umbrella term where (romantic and/or sexual) partners might have multiple (romantic and/or sexual) partners (with the knowledge and consent of their partner or partners)
- There are many ways of being consensually “non-monogamous”:
 - Could focus on a primary relationship with some “open” romantic and/or sexual boundaries...
 - Could include closed units of more than two people
 - Could include open networks of multiple partners
 - Many configurations and different “rules” and expectations



Polynormativity (n):

- an emerging set of norms, especially under the polyamorous umbrella, of “respectable non-monogamy”
- the normative model of non-monogamy that is focused on a couple at the top of a prescriptive relationship hierarchy which is maintained via rules (e.g., one partner having “veto power” over another's actions does)

Polyromantic (adj.):

- experiencing romantic attraction toward people of multiple (but not necessarily all) genders— analogous to the way biromantic refers to romantic attraction to people of at least two genders
- not to be confused with polyamorous

Polysexual (adj.):

1. sexual orientation describing people who are emotionally, sexually, romantically, etc. attracted to (and/or potentially interested in forming intimate romantic/sexual relationships with) people of multiple (but not necessarily all) genders
 2. experiencing sexual (but not necessarily romantic) attraction toward people of multiple (but not necessarily all) genders (particularly in the context of someone with a non-poly romantic orientation)
- not to be confused with polyamorous

Pronouns (n):

- the small words used to refer to people (e.g., “she”, “he” and “they”)
 - in the context of asking people's “pronouns” this also includes possessive adjectives (e.g., “her”, “his”, “their”)
- using the correct pronouns for someone is a sign of respect, and using the wrong pronouns is a way of misgendering that person
- men typically use “he/him” and women typically use “she/her”
- often (but not always) people who are non-binary, genderqueer, agender, androgynous, etc., use pronouns like they/them/their; ze/hir/hir (pronounced “here”); xie, xem, xyr; ey/em/eir; etc., or no pronouns at all

Note: While it's generally not okay to ask about people's gender or body parts, it often is a good thing to ask people for their pronouns (and then to use those pronouns). However, be mindful of context (i.e., sometimes people use different pronouns in different contexts, perhaps for safety reasons). And be careful not to single anyone out by only asking people about pronouns if you think they “look trans” or are gender non-conforming: avoid incorrect assumptions and ask everyone for their pronouns!

Queer (adj, n):

- a (somewhat) reclaimed slur to refer to people of diverse non-cisgender genders and/or diverse non-heterosexual sexual orientations (to be used by the same people it might label)
- historically has been used in the context of radical resistance against homophobia, to express explicit anti-assimilationist politics; but more recently often adopted by people pushing homonormative agendas
- sometimes used as an catch-all term for everyone under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, but this is controversial and some people feel very uncomfortable being labeled “queer” for various reasons
- “queer theory” is also the formal name of a particular branch of academic study

Note: there are complicated and heated politics around the word “queer”, how it should be used and by whom. While thinking about the nuances of “queer” is important, unfortunately much of the attention on this topic takes the form of heated debates about whether (or which) aces and arospec folks “count” as “queer”, and those are often just used as opportunity for extreme anti-ace (or anti-arospec) hostility.



Queerplatonic / quirkyplatonic Relationships (QPRs):

- QPRs describe a range of “non-normative” relationships that are not in the “romantic” box and that also do not fit the “friendship” box properly— even if the relationship is or includes friendship, the word / concept of “friendship” does not express it properly or adequately. A QP partner is also known as a “zucchini”.
- QPRs represent a diverse “meta-category” of relationships and can range in significance
- QPRs often bring up issues related to monogamy/non-monogamy and commitment (whether or not the participants also do romantic/sexual relationships and/or are into monogamy generally).

Note: Because of the issues with both the “queer” and the “platonic” parts of the word, the specific term “queerplatonic” doesn’t work in practice as an umbrella term for all these relationships, and neither do any of its alternatives like “quirkyplatonic” (or “quasiplatonic”). Unfortunately, there are no viable alternatives that work for everyone. Sometimes “QP” is itself the umbrella term.

Quoiromantic (adj):

- see WTFromantic

Relationship Anarchy (n):

Relationship anarchy stems from the application of principles of anarchism deliberately applied to personal relationships. It therefore focuses around:

- a strong critique of marriage (and monogamy), as well as state regulation of personal relationships
- an emphasis on voluntary, free association, with opposition to structural & interpersonal coercion
- an approach to commitment as a form of communication, and not a form of restriction

Relationship Anarchy therefore involves:

- approaching all relationships authentically on their own terms for whatever they will be without imposing on them any pre-determined expectations (which means choosing commitments freely on an ongoing basis)
- valuing all love equally; challenging prescriptive relationship hierarchies— and rejecting polynormativity

Romantic orientation (n): (analogous to sexual orientation)

- Describes of someone’s romantic attraction (if it exists) to people of particular gender(s), whether...
 - homoromantic or gay/lesbian; heteroromantic or straight; biromantic or bi; polyromantic (attraction multiple, but not necessarily all, genders—different from polyamorous); panromantic or pan, etc.
 - and/or via some unclear pattern (WTFromantic or quoiromantic)
- Or experiencing little or no romantic attraction (aromantic / on the aromantic spectrum)

Note: Romantic and sexual orientations don't necessarily match each other and not everyone identifies with a romantic orientation or finds the concept useful.

Sex-averse / sex-repulsed (adj):

- averse to (or actively repulsed by) the idea of personally participating in sex (i.e., a sex-averse person would be averse to personally participating in sexual contact, in theory)
- a significant proportion of the ace community is sex-averse (though people may be sex-averse & non-ace)

Sex-critical (adj):

- see definition 3 of “sex-negative”

Sex-favourable (adj):

- actively into the idea of personally participating in sex, perhaps for reasons of sexual desire (i.e., a sex-favourable person would be interested in personally participating in some kind of sexual contact, in theory)
- a small proportion of the ace community is sex-favourable; most but not all sex-favourable aces seem to be grey-asexuals and demisexuals



Sex-indifferent / sex-neutral (adj):

- indifferent to the idea of personally participating in sexual contact (i.e., while a sex-indifferent person might have no particular desire for sexual contact, they might not be opposed to participating in it, in theory)
- a significant proportion of the ace community is sex-indifferent (though people may be sex-indifferent & non-ace)

Sex-negative (adj):

- a term with several very different meanings and should be approached with caution to avoid confusion:
 1. applied to traditions and ideologies that promote shame, negativity and strict social control of sexuality
 2. at one point used to mean “sex-averse” within the asexual community (before people were using terms like “sex-averse”), but this was often confused with the 1st meaning & is therefore rarely used anymore
 3. sometimes used by people endorsing a specifically “sex-negative” or “sex-critical” political philosophy, which is a critical reaction against some of the ways that “sex-positivity” has been used in practice to support violence, to promote compulsory sexuality and to undermine consent— while recognising that sex might be positive for some people, this version of “sex-negativity” is a specific challenge to, and resistance against, the belief that sex is *inherently* good (for everyone, or anyone)
 - This definition is sometimes compatible with some definitions of political sex-positivity, and some people might describe themselves as both sex-negative/sex-critical and sex-positive.

Sex-positive (adj):

- ascribes to the political philosophy of sex-positivity
- at one point used to mean “sex-favourable” within the asexual community (before “sex-favourable” was coined), but this second meaning was very confusing and is currently rarely used

Sex-positivity (n):

- a political approach toward sex and sexuality that focuses on sexual freedom and choice. on dispelling shame around sex and sexual contact, and on sexual health— viewing sex and sexuality as a (potentially) positive and empowering aspect of human experience
- some versions of sex-positivity are distinctly pro-sex and enforce compulsory sexuality—sometimes to the point of using it as a tool of sexual coercion (i.e., making sexual participation and sexual pleasure morally “necessary” for people)
- some versions of sex-positivity focus more deeply on consent, and emphasise the validity of the choice to not have sex (or certain kinds of sex) as much as the validity of the choice to have sex (or certain kinds)

Split-Orientation Model (n):

- a way of conceptualising experiences of attraction, where romantic attraction can be separate from sexual attraction (and that the two types of attraction might not necessarily match up)
- The split-orientation model says that people can have distinct sexual and romantic orientations (and that these things together are what people typically think of when they talk about “sexual orientation”)
 - **Note:** Some people (mis)interpret the split-orientation model to mean that sexual and romantic (and other types of attraction) are independent types of attraction, and that **all people** therefore have separate and independent “romantic” and “sexual” orientations. This is a misinterpretation: the split-orientation model says that different kinds of attraction can be experienced separately (but that others might not) and that people can have independent orientations (but that others might not).

Squish (n):

- basically a non-romantic “crush”
- attraction that is non-romantic (and non-sexual) in nature (e.g., a “friend crush”)



Trans (transgender) (adj):

- an umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth
- can also be a specific identity
- trans people might or might not take steps to change their outward appearance, self-expression or body to reflect their gender identity

Transmisogyny (n):

- the very specific ways that transgender women and transfeminine people are oppressed
- interconnects general transgender oppression with the oppression that women in general experience, in order to discuss and refer to the experiences that transgender women typically go through
- as racism significantly influences the marginalisation of trans women and transfeminine people, transmisogyny is often also a form of racialised violence.

Transsexual (adj):

- refers to people whose sense of their own body does not match the sex they were assigned at birth (usually this goes along with having a gender identity that does not match the gender assigned at birth)
- can be a specific identity
- transsexual people might or might not take steps to change their outward appearance or body to reflect the sex they identify with or their gender identity

WTFromantic or quoiromantic (used for the “-romantic” only):

- experiencing or possibly experiencing some kind of romantic attraction (e.g., not aromantic or completely aromantic), but also not really sure how this attraction is directed
- may include variable & changing romantic attractions or romantic attractions that don't have a clear pattern

Zedsexual / zsexual / allosexual / non-ace (n, adj):

- words to describe people who are *not* on the asexual spectrum (e.g., non-asexual people)
- an alternative to “sexual” was needed to avoid inappropriately sexualising people who are routinely inappropriately and violently sexualised against their will (e.g., queer and trans people of colour, women of colour, survivors of violence and sexual abuse, etc.)

Note: The word “allosexual” is commonly used... but people are increasingly using “zedsexual” instead because

- allosexual is a sexological term that draws on clinical authority connected to medical abuse (past and present) and some people want to avoid that in their ace terminology

Zucchini (n):

- a term used to refer to a “queerplatonic” / QP partner
- sometimes people also use other vegetables