

What is LGBTQ+?

LGBTQ+ is an umbrella term that covers various sexual and gender identities, and there are longer variants of the term that cover additional identities as well. In general, most people within the LGBTQ+ community know what these terms are, but whether you are a part of the community or not, we want to provide a brief overview of what each letter means.

- **L - Lesbian**, a term used to describe people who identify as women who love women.
- **G - Gay**, a catch-all term used for anyone who loves someone with the same gender identity, though primarily applied to men who love men.
- **B - Bisexual**, a term used for a person of any gender identity who can be attracted to people of the same or different genders.
- **T - Transgender**, a term for people whose gender identity doesn't align with the gender assigned to them at birth. This can also serve as an umbrella term for people who are genderqueer and gender non-conforming, as well.
- **Q - Queer**, an umbrella term used within the community to describe people who are either not heterosexual or cisgender. In the past, this has been used as a derogatory term, and while some in the community have reclaimed it and use it as a self-descriptor, there is more nuance to the conversation than can be covered in an overview alone.
- The **+** is included because there are many more who are a part of the community, such as intersex and asexual individuals, and those who are questioning their identity and working things out, for example.

Being a Good Ally

There are many ways to be a good ally to LGBTQ+ people. In order to provide some pointers on how to be a good ally, we reached out to [Mermaids](#), a United Kingdom-based organization for transgender and gender variant youth, and [The Trevor Project](#), a United States-based organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention resources for LGBTQ+ youth.

Jake Edwards, Communications Assistant at Mermaids, offered these answers on how to support LGBTQ+ friends and loved ones:

What are some ways to be a friend to and ally of LGBTQ+ people?

- Start with acceptance. Educating yourself is not something that will happen overnight but it's important for the LGBTQ+ people around you to know that they'll be accepted. Find some trusted sources online to learn about different identities, and don't worry too much about making mistakes. Mistakes happen to us all, and the best thing to do is apologise and move on — sometimes dwelling on your mistakes can make other people feel even more uncomfortable.

Is there a "best" way to be a friend and ally? How do I know if I'm doing it right?

- As long as you're trying your best and listening to the people around you, you'll be fine. It's less about being 'right' and more about being compassionate.

Is there any piece of advice you want to give our community members on how we can best respect the dignity and rights of LGBTQ+ people?

- Report bullying when you see it. If someone critiques how your work represents the LGBTQ+ community, listen to what's being said and know that it's not a personal critique of your abilities.

Rob Todaro, Press Secretary for The Trevor Project, provided these tips on how to be a good ally during these unprecedented times:

- Check-in with your LGBTQ+ friends and family.
- Practice empathy and listen without judgment.
- Foster the creation of safe, accepting environments wherever you are.
- Share helpful mental health and self-care resources.

He also recommends reading [Coming Out: A Handbook for LGBTQ Young People](#) and the [Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth](#), two resources at The Trevor Project that cover a wide range of topics for LGBTQ+ youth and allies looking to support them.

The best thing for allies to do is to help foster the creation of safe and accepting environments where LGBTQ+ youth can feel loved, respected, and affirmed. Just [one accepting adult](#) can reduce the risk of a suicide attempt among LGBTQ+ young people by 40 percent.

We encourage you to do your part to support LGBTQ+ friends and loved ones, and hope you found this information helpful. Don't forget to read and comment on our first [Pride Month on DeviantArt](#) journal to get the exclusive Pride badge for your Profile!