



Media Reference Guide

While there are an estimated 1.4 million transgender or nonbinary people living in the United State, only 16% of Americans say they personally know someone who is transgender or nonbinary. A 2013 Pew poll shows that 87% of Americans say they personally know someone who is gay or lesbian. If a stereotypical or defamatory image of a gay or lesbian person appears in the media, viewers can compare it to real people they know. But, when a stereotypical or defamatory image of a transgender or nonbinary person appears in the media, the viewer may assume that all transgender or nonbinary people are actually like that; they have no real-life experience with which to compare it.

Covering transgender and nonbinary issues can be complicated, but the allied organizations below are always available to answer questions, provide resources, and identify spokespeople. Below are some basic tips for writing fair and accurate stories about transgender and non-binary people:

- 1. Always use chosen name, pronouns, and titles.**

Begin every interview by asking a person's name (and spelling), pronouns, and title. Even if this information may appear obvious, it's important not make assumptions about an individual's **gender identity**. Asking at the beginning of the interview will prevent the creation of errors and faux pas. For instance, referring to Dr. Jill Biden as "Mrs. Biden" is reductive and sexist as it would undermine her accomplishments and identity, just as referring to Mx. River Smith* as "Miss Smith" would devalue Mx. Smith's identity.

Likewise, do not *misgender* or *misname* trans or nonbinary people; to do so is extremely rude. Additionally, avoid phrases that cast doubt on the authenticity of trans or nonbinary people's identities. For example, the phrase, "Bruce Jenner, who wants to be referred to as 'Caitlin' and 'she,'" suggests that Caitlin is an alias or character that Ms. Jenner plays, when in fact it is her real identity.

*Mx. is a gender-neutral title used by many non-binary people.

- 2. When discussing the past, use a person's current name, pronouns, and title.**

Even if discussing a trans or nonbinary person prior to transition, use their current information when referring to them. After all, a trans woman was a woman even when she was five-years-old and presenting as a boy, even if other people in the world just weren't aware of it yet.



3. Educate yourself about non-binary people.

Non-binary individuals are people who are neither a woman nor a man. They may feel that they embody elements of both, that they are somewhere in between or their gender cannot be described within the binary. Non-binary people may still have a strong sense of gender and find it very distressing to be told that they “must choose” to either identify themselves as male or female. Many identify as transgender.

4. Do not comment on the appearance or attractiveness of trans and non-binary people.

While this may seem obvious, even sympathetic journalists often comment on how “good” trans or nonbinary people look, which reinforces the narrative that trans or nonbinary people must look a certain way to be valid in society. The narrative trope of a transgender person feeling like an “ugly duckling” and transitioning into a “beautiful swan” is cliché. Likewise, avoid questions and discussions about how a trans or nonbinary person looked or presented in the past.

5. Avoid discussing individuals’ medical transition processes.

Medical histories are deeply private and personal. Additionally, some people – particularly the opponents of transgender and nonbinary people – often focus on the genitalia of transgender or nonbinary people to invalidate their access to public accommodations like restrooms. Some trans and nonbinary people want medical interventions, and others do not, cannot afford them, or cannot find a qualified medical professional with the expertise to perform them. Unless the story is specifically about the cost of care for trans and nonbinary people, the cost of these treatments is not an appropriate topic.

6. Describe the whole person. Gender identity is just one of the many characteristics that make someone unique. Tell stories about transgender and non-binary people that go beyond “when did you know” and “what surgeries have you had”. Consider integrating transgender and non-binary people into non-trans specific stories (ie. interview a transgender mother on Mother’s Day).

7. It’s “transgender,” not “transgendered.”

“Transgender” is an adjective, a word that describes a larger person like “tall” or “magnificent.” Thus, a person who is trans may be a “transgender woman,” a “trans man,” or “transgender person.” Please do not use “transgendered”, “transgenderism”, or “transgenders”.

8. Avoid outdated language.

“Transvestite,” “transsexual,” “male-to-female/MTF,” “female-to-male/FTM,” among others, are outdated and considered rude to trans and non-binary people.

9. Cite experts and fact-check anti-trans activists.

Trans and non-binary people are the experts in discussing trans and non-binary issues. If your story requires the input of medical or psychological opinions, look for experts who specifically



work with trans and nonbinary people. The political opponents of transgender and nonbinary individuals are not experts in trans and nonbinary people, gender identity, history, criminology, medical science, psychology, or child development. Many of these people and organizations are informed by pseudoscience created by anti-LGBTQ hate groups actively watched by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The public is vastly unaware of this fact, and it is crucial that journalists fact-check and examine the sources of anti-LGBTQ groups and inform the public when they say things that are demonstratively untrue.

Free and Fair Montana is a coalition of various Montana organizations that seeks to oppose I-183. Per a decision on the part of Free and Fair Montana, at least half of the members of the coalition's executive leadership are transgender or nonbinary people. The organizations that comprise Free and Fair Montana are:

ACLU of Montana
Forward Montana Foundation
Montana Gender Alliance
Montana Human Rights Network
Montana Women Vote
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Montana

To ask questions or identify spokespeople, please contact the campaign chair Zuri Moreno:

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