



# Let's Learn Together

## *Gender*



Let's Learn Together is a practical framework for engaging in complex topics. This booklet is yours to keep. Write in it, read it with family, pass it along to a friend. Make it yours.

Learn more about Let's Learn Together at [wilmettelibrary.info/learntogether](http://wilmettelibrary.info/learntogether).

# Welcome

***Why are some people using “they/them” pronouns?***

***How can you support someone who is exploring their own gender?***

***How can our community better understand one another?***

Let's Learn Together programming aims to foster belonging and understanding, and to empower individual growth. We acknowledge that each person's context for addressing these complex topics is personal and unique.

Beginning with your own beliefs and self-identity, we invite you to engage with the topic of gender in a way that is meaningful to you. This booklet offers questions and perspectives that you can use to start conversations and expand your understanding.

The process of expanding our mindset requires us to examine beliefs, ideas, and constructs that are deeply embedded in our society. Learning about gender can be affirming and joyful. It may also be unfamiliar and might even feel uncomfortable. Learning more about gender identities may also be part of a personal and/or professional commitment to treating people how they want to be treated.

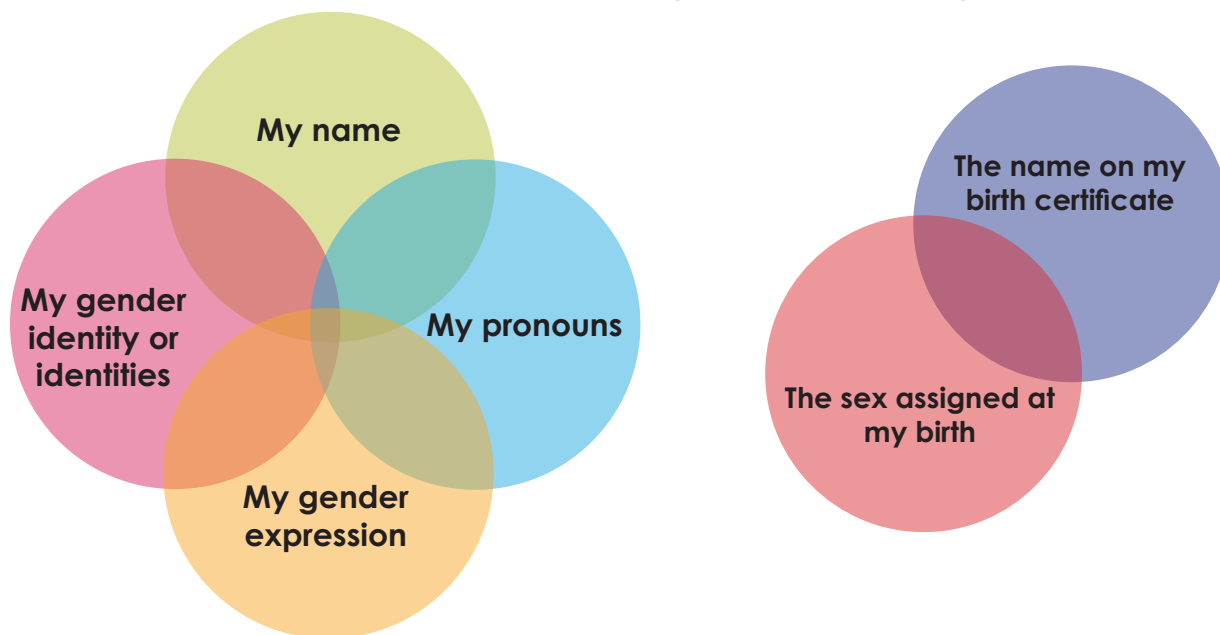
Whether you're curious about language or supporting a loved one, Wilmette Public Library provides resources and programs that support gender literacy at every level. Ask a librarian for book recommendations. Join a Let's Learn Together family or adult program to spark new ideas and build community. Our programs and collections are constantly evolving as we learn together.



# Gender Identity

Self-awareness is an important step in learning how we are all connected. We learn how we are unique, how we are the same, and how our experiences may differ according to social structures and institutional constructs.

Gender identity is your innate sense of your own gender. Your gender identity may or may not align with the sex you were assigned at birth. Some people use labels like cisgender, nonbinary, or transgender to describe their gender. Other people find labels restrictive, or they might choose a unique term to describe their gender. Some may opt to go without a label while they explore their gender or if their gender is fluid.



## Language Lesson: Trans & Cis

You may hear some people refer to themselves as “trans” or “cis,” and wonder what this means. The prefix “cis” comes from Latin and means “on this side.” It is an antonym, or opposite, of “trans,” which means “on the other side of” or “beyond.” Cisgender is when a person’s gender matches the gender they were assigned at birth. Transgender is when a person’s gender is different, or beyond, what was assigned at birth. Cisgender and transgender are only two examples of labels people might use.

# Is Gender Binary?

A binary is when something is categorized into two parts. The binary way of thinking is deeply embedded in many societies and is applied to many systems. The gender binary is a system in which all people are assigned to one of only two genders.

*In what ways is this concept applied in your work environment?*

*In your home?*

*Who benefits from this system? Who is left out?*

co she/her <sup>ey/em</sup>  
<sub>ve/ver</sub> yo  
xie/hir

## Let's Talk About Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that stands in for a noun.  
A personal pronoun refers to a person.

per en <sup>ve/vis</sup>  
he/him <sub>e/em</sub>  
they/them xe/xem

Pronouns reflect a person's identity. Throughout history, pronouns have evolved to encompass current ideas and concepts in society. Today, the singular "they" is regularly used to refer to individual people whose gender identity is unknown. "A patron needs their library card to check out books". A person may also use "they/them" pronouns as an expression of gender. "JJ would like to renew their library books". Both usages are grammatically correct.

Pronouns are one way language can be used to describe, and honor, a person's identity. Gendered pronouns like "he/him" and "she/her" or gender-neutral pronouns like "they/theirs" each have their place, depending on the identity of the individual or group you're talking to.

***What pronoun do you want people to use when they talk about you?***





# Gender Expression

The way we put our gender out into the world

## Things to Think About:

- What clothes or accessories make you feel like you?
- Do you express yourself differently each day?
- With whom and where do you feel comfortable expressing yourself?
- What do you want others to see when they look at you?

Gender expression and gender identity are separate from sexual orientation, which describes who a person is or is not attracted to.



# Be an Ally

No matter who we are, what we wear, or what pronouns we use, we all deserve to be respected and protected. Learning and expanding our understanding, as well as our vocabulary, is part of building a strong community.

## What if I make a mistake?

As we learn together, mistakes will happen. You might misgender someone. We can acknowledge, apologize, show gratitude, and grow.

I want to be respectful to JJ, but I'm always messing up their pronouns.

Let's take a few minutes and practice together.

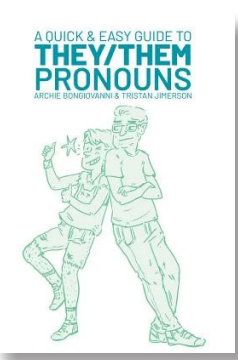
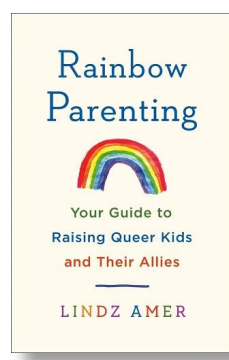
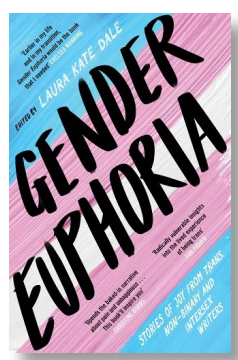
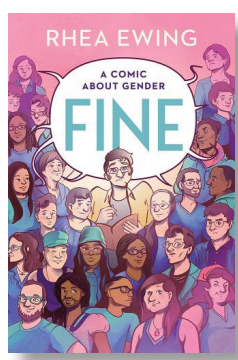
Try this language expanding exercise: Describe the plot of a film using gender neutral language. For example, "child" rather than "girl"; "person" in place of "woman".

## Keep Learning

It is not the responsibility of gender-expansive or trans community members to educate in this work. Check out these resources or ask a librarian to help you find additional information.

**The Trevor Project**  
[thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org)

**PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois**  
[pflagillinois.org](http://pflagillinois.org)

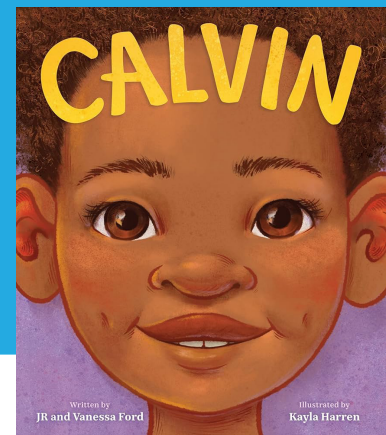
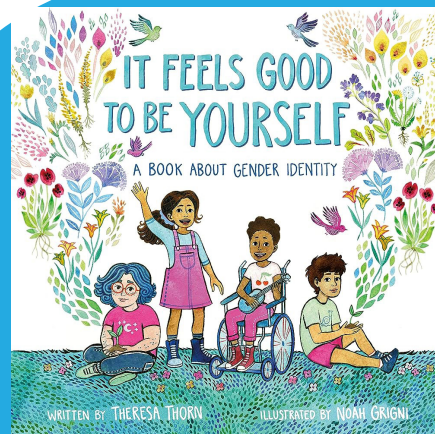
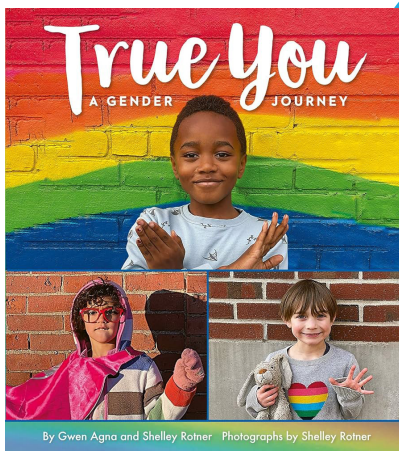
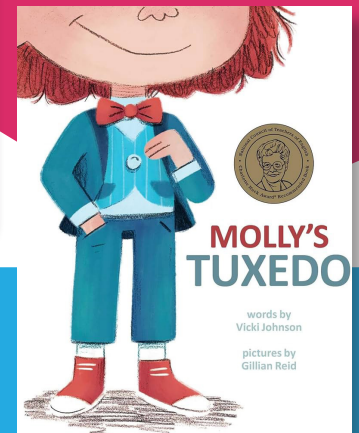
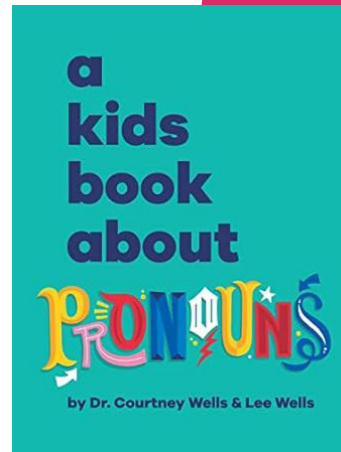
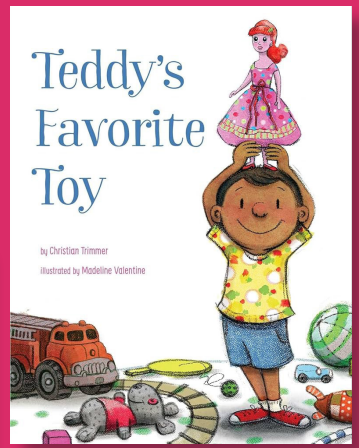




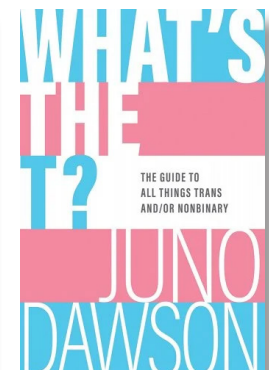
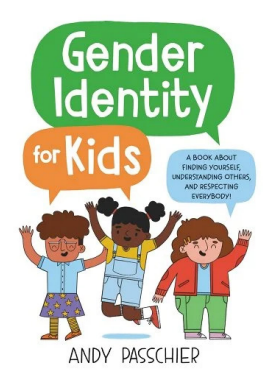
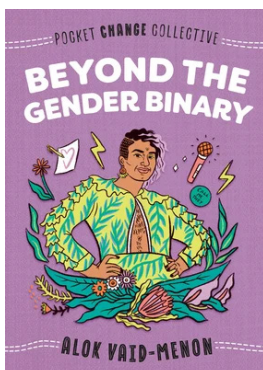
## Reading with Kids

Picture books are part of creating a safe, affirming environment for children. They also offer context and language that can build dialogue around less familiar or confusing topics.

When you're reading with a child, take time to ask questions about the story and illustrations. Listen to the child's observations and help make connections to their own experiences.



## Resources for Teens & Tweens



# Productive Vocabulary for Meaningful Dialogue



We recognize that this brief glossary is limited and does not begin to cover the expanse of descriptive language related to people's unique identities and self truths.

**Biological sex:** Sex assigned at birth based on physical markers; also known as sex assigned at birth

**Cisgender (cis):** When a person's gender identity matches the gender assigned at birth

**Deadname:** To use a rejected name instead of a declared name in an intentional effort to undermine a person's identity

**Gender binary:** Recognizing just two genders (male and female)

**Gender congruence:** The psychological state of contentment and comfort when one's gender expression is aligned with one's gender identity

**Gender dysphoria:** a psychological state of conflict between one's gender expression and one's gender identity

**Gender expansive:** An adjective describing a more flexible gender identity than what might be associated with a gender binary; also known as gender nonconforming and gender creative

**Gender expression:** How we put our gender out to the world

**Gender identity:** A person's deeply held sense of self

**Gender neutral language:** A way of talking about people without specifying a particular gender

**Intersex:** When a person's biological anatomy or chromosomes are not easily categorized into the binary gender system

**Misgender:** To purposely or mistakenly apply an incorrect gender to a person

**Nonbinary:** When a person's gender identity differs from the binary construct of female or male

**Sexual orientation:** Who you are or are not attracted to

**Transgender (trans):** When a person's gender identity differs from the gender assigned at birth

Let's Learn Together is a set of programs and tools designed to provide a framework for discussing challenging topics and social issues. Through literature, activities, and expert presenters, you are invited to get curious about subjects relevant to our society, and uncover and challenge attitudes and biases.



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