

## #4 Non-Binary

TENI life hacks are designed to provide information that we hope will make your life a little bit easier. Everyone is different and there are many diverse experiences in the trans community. Our life hacks should be considered as guidance only.

### Non-Binary

Non-binary is an umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of male or female. This includes individuals whose gender identity is neither exclusively male nor female, a combination of male and female or between or beyond genders. Similar to the usage of transgender, people under the non-binary umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms. Many agender or genderless people do not identify as non-binary or binary as both terms suggest gender being present.

### Non-Binary Identities

Some terms which non-binary people identify with are genderfluid, bigender, gender neutral, androgynous, demigender or simply just non-binary or genderqueer. It is important for you to do your own research to see what terms you identify with the most and what each of these terms mean.

### Presentation

Non-binary people express their gender in many different ways. Some non-binary people strive for an androgynous or gender neutral presentation, they may seek to be read as neither male nor female. Other non-binary people may present in a stereotypically masculine or feminine way. It is important to remember that regardless of how you present, your non-binary identity is valid.

### Pronouns

Pronouns are words used to refer to someone or something. For example, 'Cookie Monster went to the funfair, **they** had a great time'.

Gender specific pronouns are 'he' and 'she' which are usually used for men and women respectively. Many non-binary people do not identify with these pronouns and choose to opt for more gender neutral pronouns like they or no pronouns at all. Many non-binary people choose to use gender-specific pronouns as these are not exclusively for binary people.

Pronoun	Nominative	Oblique	Possessive	Possessive determiner	Reflexive pronoun
<b>He</b>	He is nice	I like him	His hair	That is his	He likes himself
<b>She</b>	She is nice	I like her	Her hair	That is hers	She likes herself
<b>Singular they</b>	They are nice	I like them	Their hair	That is theirs	They like themselves
<b>Name</b>	[Name] is nice	I like [Name]	[Name]'s hair	That is [Name]'s	[Name] likes [Name]'s self

There are many pronouns to choose from and it's important to choose ones that you are most comfortable with. You may choose pronouns on how they make you feel, their practicality, on how popular they are/they're not. What's important is that you choose your own pronouns.

## Myths:

- **Non-Binary people do not medically transition** - some non-binary people choose not to medically transition but others medically transition. It all depends on the right decision for each person.
- **Non-Binary identities have been made up in the last 20 years** - Contrary to recently popular belief, non-binary people have been around in all societies for a very long time.
  - Examples of this would be Hijra people in South Asia which are AMAB (Assigned male at birth) people who have a feminine gender expression. They are legally recognised as a gender other than male or female in some countries today.
  - Two-spirit is the English term which describes Indigenous North Americans who wore clothing and performed jobs which were associated to both men and women.
  - It is important that people outside of these cultures don't adopt these terms as it is viewed as culturally appropriative. There are many other terms for people outside of these cultures to identify with.
- **All non-binary identities fit on a spectrum between masculine and feminine** - 'Many people like to say that the binary gender system only allows us two colours, when really the full possibilities of gender exist as a whole range of colour. This analogy is more useful than "spectrum" because it allows for all genders to be measured not by the amount at which they "measure up" to the two most common gender identities and expressions, but simply by the way they just are.' (Ballou, 2014)<sup>1</sup>

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## Supporting Non-Binary People

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- **Ask people's pronouns.**

It is easy to ask for someone's pronouns at the same time as you are asking their name, it may even be a way to educate someone that not everyone's gender matches society's norms.
- **Explore gender-neutral toilet options in your locality.**

Any trans person will be grateful of the safe space to use the toilet without fear of harassment.
- **Educate yourself.**

Learn about different pronouns, genders and experiences.
- **Don't ask intrusive questions.**

Just because someone uses pronouns or identifies in a way that isn't the norm, doesn't mean they are a walking encyclopaedia.
- **Correct others respectfully.**

If someone misgenders any trans person and that person is out – quietly and respectfully correct the person.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/12/myths-non-binary-people/>

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### For more information:

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