

Is there a test I can take?

Nope. Some people wish there were a test. They may think it would be easier to get others to accept them, or even to figure things out themselves, if there were. But no worries! We have designed some activities below to help you find out more about your gender identity.

Try It Out!: my gender

To explore your inner thoughts and feelings about gender, get in a safe, quiet space so you can answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

What are some of your earliest memories related to gender? (For example: *I remember my dad saying, "Are you sure you don't want a blue balloon? Blue is for boys." Or, I remember wanting to be in Boy Scouts like my brother, but my parents said I couldn't because I was a girl.*)

Were you ever told you looked or acted like a boy? Like a girl? How did you feel when this happened?

Who are your gender role models? In other words, if you could be like anyone in terms of gender, who would you be like?

Fold a piece of paper in half, like a book. Draw on the cover of this book how you think other people see your gender. Now open the book. Draw how you see your gender, or how you would like the world to see your gender. If they are different, draw both on different sides of the inside of your book. How do you feel when you look at each version of yourself?

Read the following examples. Underline parts of people's experiences that feel "right on" to you. Cross out parts that feel different from your experience. Some parts won't have an underline or a cross; they will just be neutral or unsure, and that is fine.

My whole life I felt like something just wasn't right. Sometimes I would look in the mirror and feel like I was looking at someone else. Like it wasn't me. The person I saw in the mirror and the person I felt I was were not the same.

I love to be surprising: I make sure that people know that even though they see me as a girl, I love sports. Or, if they think I'm a "tomboy," that I also have a huge number of dresses.

beginning the journey

How would it or does it feel when people see you as a boy or man?

(A note for this question and the next two: Sometimes when you imagine these scenarios, the first thing you feel is fear. Fear can overshadow other emotions. So if you feel fear, write that down, but then put down what other emotions you would feel after that. It may help to think of this happening in a special situation where there would be no possible danger or rejection.)

How would it or does it feel when people see you as a girl or woman?

How would it or does it feel when people see you as a gender other than girl/woman or boy/man (for example, as androgynous or Two-Spirit)?

As a child it never really crossed my mind that I was transgender. I seemed to like all the same things that the other boys liked. I liked sports and I liked girls. It was not until high school that I started to think that my experience was different. It is hard to describe how I felt or why I felt that way but I just did not feel like a guy. When I say that I am a woman it feels right. I feel like I have always been a woman and not much has really changed. I still like sports and I still like girls.

I've spent a lot of time trying to prove to people that I'm not gay. As hard as I try, though, people always seem to notice that I'm more feminine than other guys. My parents criticize me a lot for this.

I love being a girl and I always have!

I always hated dresses. I hated dolls. I hated Barbies. I preferred playing with all my brother's toys and never touched my own. As a kid my mom would always say I was a tomboy and tell my dad that I would outgrow it. I never did. There never came a time when I wanted to wear a dress or paint my nails. I never really cared or thought about whether I was a girl or a boy until I was around twelve years old. My body started to change and I did not like it. It felt wrong, like something was happening that I could not control. Something I did not want.

I never really felt like a boy, but I never really felt like a girl either. I just wish I could move somewhere that gender doesn't exist and be me—not a boy or a girl.

Kids at school always make fun of me for acting "like a girl." The truth is, I do kind of feel more like a girl than a boy. But it's hard to say that.

I'm a total boy and that's just me. But I also really like that I was raised a girl when I was younger. I think it made me better able to understand different perspectives.

Now combine all the parts of the above experiences that felt "right on" to you and write them below:

race and ethnicity

Race is sort of like gender in that it is something that we think of as having factual biological categories, but in reality it isn't so clear-cut. When we talk about race, we are usually referring to inherited physical characteristics that make a person appear as "white," "black," "Asian," and so on. A person can be multiracial, having two or more races represented in their inherited physical characteristics.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, relates to your culture instead of your biologically inherited traits. Culture can be defined in many ways and so people may define their ethnicity based on nation, continent, or other group-defining factors. For example, a person who is white could be of many different ethnicities, such as Eastern European, South African, or Jewish. A person who is black might identify as African American, Haitian, or Latino. A person who is Asian might identify as Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino. Then of course, people may have multiple ethnicities that are all important parts of their identities. There are endless possibilities.

Race and ethnicity are central factors in the way we experience the world, the way we are treated, and the values and beliefs we learn.

Try It Out!: racial and ethnic identity

Let's spend some time thinking about your racial and ethnic identities and how they relate to your gender:

What racial and ethnic communities are you a part of?

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What is considered to be "normal" with respect to gender in your racial and ethnic communities?

What have you learned in your racial and ethnic communities about people who have gender identities or gender expressions that are different from what is considered "normal"?

Can you envision your gender identity or expression changing in any ways in the future? If so, list the ways. Next to each, write how you expect people in your racial and ethnic communities may react to these changes:

balancing multiple identities

How are your racial and ethnic communities' values similar to your own values regarding gender? How are they different? How do you balance these differences?

How does your gender identity and expression influence how much you feel you belong with people in your racial and ethnic communities?

Try it Out!: exploring your sexual and romantic identities

On the following page we have provided a table to help you explore your own sexual and romantic identities. Some common identity labels are listed in the far left column. But there are a ton more options out there (including anything you come up with yourself). Feel free to write in other identities that you are considering or have heard of in the blank boxes in the left column. In the middle column discuss why each identity fits and in the far right column discuss why it doesn't.

When exploring the fit of an identity it may help to say it aloud, "I am _____," and then reflect on what thoughts and feelings come up when you say that. Remember, whatever label you come up with can reflect your attractions and behaviors, but it doesn't have to fit perfectly since most people's labels don't anyway.

| Identity | Why this does fit for me | Why this does not fit for me |
|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lesbian | | |
| Gay | | |
| Bisexual | | |
| Heterosexual | | |
| Queer | | |

dating and

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Asexual | | |
| Pansexual | | |
| (Other sexual identity label) | | |
| Aromantic | | |
| Biromantic | | |
| Heteroromantic | | |
| Homoromantic | | |
| Panromantic | | |
| (Other romantic identity label) | | |

Turn-Ons

Examples: When someone kisses my neck, thinking about having a hard penis, touching someone's chest, when someone smells like coconut, thinking about making out in the water, lying down behind someone, play wrestling, candles, sex music, feeling romantic and connected to someone

Turn-Offs

Examples: Pink frilly stuff, when someone touches my chest, when a person is aggressive, when a person is very passive, when I dress in more masculine clothes, when a person only seems to care about sex, when someone hasn't brushed their teeth after eating

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Sometimes when people feel uncomfortable with their gender identities or the gender expression their body gives them, they can feel hopeless about having a satisfying sexual relationship. While it makes sense to be nervous about this, it turns out there are plenty of creative ways in which you can experience sexual pleasure with a partner. For example, if you don't want someone to touch your genitals, you can utilize other parts of your body that turn you on. If your earlobes are particularly sensitive, you could ask your partner to give you "earlobe blow jobs" instead. Now that's getting creative!

Are there particular body parts that are off limits during sexual activity? If so, what are they?

Are there body parts that can only be touched in certain ways for it to be pleasurable? If so, what are they?

Are there parts of your body outside of genitals that are particularly sensitive for you (for example, neck, ears, back) and might be places to explore sexual pleasure? If so, what are they?

Are there things that you aren't sure how they would feel but might want to try?

Examples: Wearing a strap-on while my partner cuddles with me on the couch, taking my shirt off but telling my partner I want to keep my bra on, getting or giving an earlobe blow job

Now that you have an idea about your turn-ons and turn-offs, how do you talk with your partner to make sure they know what they are? Let's talk about how to talk about sex.

communication about sex

There are no correct or incorrect answers to the previous questions—however you experience your body sexually is okay. Every person experiences sexuality in their own unique way. However, your partner will not know about your sexual needs and preferences unless you tell them. Even worse, they may continue to try to please you in ways that cause you discomfort. This is why developing good sexual communication is so important. If you are able to voice what sexual activities fit or don't fit for you, and listen to your partners' needs, then you are on track to having satisfying sexual experiences.

Unfortunately, people often feel uncomfortable talking openly and honestly about sex, especially about their own sexual needs and preferences. People often worry that they will feel embarrassed, that their partner will not understand them, that their partner will think they are strange, and so on.

