

Gender and Sexual Orientation Diversity Cheat Sheet

We all know it would be great to see more games that include characters of diverse genders and sexuality! But a lot of writers are understandably hesitant to write things outside of their own experience. This quick guide contains a number of example paragraphs for editing as needed and including in character sheets. Unless a game is a deep character study on identity and gender dynamics, it doesn't take more than a quick sentence or two, and allowing more options will make your game more welcoming to much of your player base. Try it out – it could be a lot easier than you think!

Heterosexual: [Bob's character sheet]: You used to date Alice, but now you're dating Catherine. She's a wonderful woman: smart, funny, nice, and sexy, too! Recently though, she seems upset after [...unrelated plot].

Homosexual: [Eleanor's character sheet]: You used to date Alice, but now you're dating Catherine. She's a wonderful woman: smart, funny, nice, and sexy, too! Recently though, she seems upset after [...unrelated plot].

Bisexual: You used to date Alice, but now you're dating David. He's a wonderful man: smart, funny, nice, and sexy, too! Recently though, he seems upset after [...unrelated plot].

Asexual: You used to date Alice, but now you're dating Catherine. She's a wonderful woman: smart, funny, nice. You're not really interested in sex, but that's ok with her; you love to cuddle each other, and that's more important. Recently though [...unrelated plot]

Alternative 1: You've never really felt any urges to have sex with someone, but Catherine likes it, and you did enjoy it when you tried, and you're happy to have sex again sometimes. She knows about this and is happy to ask you if she wants sex, and deal with it herself if you don't feel like it right now. You both love to cuddle each other, and that's more important. Recently [...unrelated plot]

Alternative 2: You're not interested in having sex with anyone, but Catherine does have a high need for sexual contact. You've both agreed that it's ok if she has sex with other people, as long as she speaks to you about it first; you want her to be happy, and as long as you still love each other and plan to spend your lives together, it's not a problem. Recently [...unrelated plot]

Aromantic: You've never fallen in love and you don't develop romantic feelings for people. However, your friends, Alice and Catherine, are very important to you. You have a strong bond of platonic love for each other, and have even discussed living together and maybe raising children together. Recently [...unrelated plot]

Alterative 1: You've never fallen in love and you don't develop romantic feelings for people. However, you do feel sexual attraction. Your friends, Alice and Catherine, are very important to you. You have a strong bond of platonic love for each other, and you and Catherine have sometimes had sex in the past, and may do again. You plan on living together and maybe even raising children together. Recently [...unrelated plot]

Demisexual: [Bob's character sheet] You have been very good friends with Alice for many years, and a few years back, you found yourself becoming very attracted to her. Unfortunately, that didn't work out, but the two of you are still friends. You've only met Catherine very recently, and you'd like to be friends. Of course, you don't know yet if you will develop such feelings for her as well; you're only ever attracted to people you already have a close emotional bond with, so it's impossible to know in advance whether you will or will not fancy your friends in the future! However, the two of you get on well, and you're hoping the you can build a closer connection. Recently she's been upset [...unrelated plot]

Other sexuality options: Demiromantic (as with demisexual, but with romantic not sexual attraction); Pansexual (this is an explicit note that someone is attracted to many genders including non-binary people); Hetero/Homoflexible (primarily hetero/homosexual, but sometimes attracted to people of another gender); Mix-and-match (for example: sexually and romantically attracted to men and demi-romantically attracted to women).

Cisgender: [Alice's character sheet] You are so looking forward to the ball! Sure, even when you were little girl you were not a very 'girly' girl; but it is nice sometimes to get to show off your feminine side, dance and wear a nice dress and feel pretty. You are wondering if your dress will still fit; you're only a couple of months pregnant though, and you don't think it's showing yet.

Trans woman: [Alice's character sheet] You are so looking forward to the ball! You were never very comfortable at them when people thought you were a boy, but these days, it's so nice getting to just relax and show off your feminine side, dance and wear a nice dress and feel pretty.

Trans man: [Bob's character sheet] You are so looking forward to the ball! You were never very comfortable at them when people thought you were a girl, but these days, it's nice to show off your masculine side and feel strong and handsome in your tux. You are wondering if it will still fit you; you're only a couple of months pregnant though, and you don't think it's showing yet.

Agender: You are so looking forward to the ball! Sure, it can be a bit confusing; if you wear your favourite tux and waistcoat, people say you're showing off your quirky self, but if you wear a dress they say you're showing your femininity, which doesn't make sense to you. You're not quite sure what this gender thing is or why everyone seems to think it's such a big deal that you have one; it would be nice if they'd stop. Still, it can be nice to dance and express yourself, maybe take your turn at leading.

Androgyne: You are so looking forward to the ball! Sure, it can be difficult to find the right outfit in such a gendered environment; wearing either an evening dress or a tux just feels wrong to you. You've picked out a shirt, waistcoat, and lovely sequined skirt, and some lovely eye shadow and mascara that you think will complement your beard.

Bigender: You are so looking forward to the ball! Sure, you don't know in advance whether you will be feeling masculine or feminine on the day, or even whether you will find your gender flipping partway through. You've chosen two outfits: a tux and your favourite waistcoat, and a lovely sequined dress. Either way, it will be nice to dance. Either you will show off your feminine side and feel pretty in your dress, or you will show off your masculine side and feel strong and handsome as you lead.

Other gender options: [Note: 'Nonbinary' (NB) is a term for identities that are neither full man nor woman]. Genderfluid (your gender is not fixed); third gender (you do have a gender but it's something other than man/woman). In historical games, NB people would be perceived as male or female but eccentric; in modern games, they may use another pronoun such as 'they/their'. Of course some of the examples above were quite stereotypes; in practice, gender expression, societal role, and internal identity may all be different, and may or may not match the gender someone was assigned at birth.

...And finally: Let's not forget intersexed people! Their gender identity can be any of the above, but their body has some reproductive or sexual characteristics that does not conform to the typical way people are usually assigned between either 'male' or 'female'. This may or may not have been obvious at birth.