

How do I talk to trans women on dating apps?



@noahdeart

This tip sheet is for men who date trans women or trans feminine people who want to learn more about chatting respectfully online.*

* "Men" in this resource refers to cisgender men. "Trans women" refers to trans women, trans feminine people, women who have a trans and gender diverse history or experience, but do not identify as transgender - and other trans feminine culturally-specific identities such as Sistergirls, Fa'afafine and Kinner.

Summary

- Talking to trans women can be enjoyable and could lead to meeting up, or even starting a new relationship.
- Some men use disrespectful language when talking to trans women online, especially about their bodies. This is offensive and means trans women may not want to meet up with them.
- Different trans women prefer different terms to talk about themselves. Using the words she prefers shows respect.
- Some men talk about sex too much or too soon. Be respectful and consensual when talking about sex or sharing pictures.
- Instead of asking invasive questions about her body, be clear about what you are looking for and let her decide if it's a good match.

Chatting with trans women can be fun and might even lead to a hook-up, or the start of a new relationship. However, there can be some additional challenges chatting with trans women online, especially if you don't know a lot about transgender culture or about trans women's experiences in the world.



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Trans women's identities

We all use different language to describe our identities and experiences in the world. Some of the people you are chatting online with might identify with a variety of terms including trans women, trans feminine, woman, woman of trans experience, non-binary, whilst others might use other trans feminine culturally-specific identities such as Sistergirls, Fa'afafine and Kinner. Take the time to look up any unfamiliar terms online.

Some trans women might simply identify as a woman, rather than with their transgender history or experience.

"I've always wanted to be seen as a woman first who has a trans experience, as a part of my history, as a part of who I am." Hannah

For other people their transgender experience might be really important to them.

"I use the term 'junk' for my genitals. I don't like my partners using the same words for my genitals that men use such as 'penis' or 'dick'. Other trans women who haven't had lower surgery might use other terms that they find is a right fit for them." Electra*

Trans women might find terms such as "she-male", "transvestite", "tranny", or "chicks with dicks" highly offensive. Although some people might identify with terms such as "transsexual" or "MTF", others may consider these terms to be out of date.

It is OK to ask someone how they identify to help make sure you use the correct terms when talking to or about someone.

How to speak to trans women about your sexuality

Sharing the terms you use to describe your identity might also be important to you and it can be helpful for trans women in understanding your experience. However, saying things like “I like trans women but I am not gay” implies trans women are men, which is offensive as it invalidates them as women or invalidates their femininity.

“Sleeping with or dating trans women doesn’t make you gay. We are not men. It’s so disrespectful when guys project their own fear and shame onto me, because they are freaking out about their sexuality and stigma in society.” Electra

Body diversity

Trans women and their bodies are incredibly diverse. It’s important not to make assumptions about the type of body a potential date might have.

“Look I had my lower surgery (vaginoplasty) almost six years ago and I still often get men asking me for dick pics. That always made me feel really gross...” Crystal

Trans women may use language to describe their bodies that is different from the language other women use. This is especially relevant for trans women who have not had genital surgery. If you’re negotiating intimacy, check-in with your date on what language she uses to describe her body and make sure to use the same terms.

*sometimes called genital reconfiguration surgery, gender affirmation surgery or other similar terms.

Asking questions about bodies

Some trans women might want to be upfront about their surgical status, but it should always be their choice about what they want to share, and when they choose to share. Be open to getting to know people rather than solely focusing on their genitals.

“You wouldn’t ask any other woman that you’re on a date with about her anatomy on your first few dates. You wouldn’t ask that of anybody, so why would you do it to a trans person? I would say to not ask inappropriate questions, to wait until the trans person is ready to share that part of themselves.” Hannah

If you are looking for a particular type of trans woman or body type, it may be better to respectfully disclose what you are looking for, rather than asking strangers to share highly personal information about their bodies.

Having an attraction to certain bodies and expressions is fine! Just remember that it is important to communicate this in ways that are respectful and consensual.

“If you’re looking for someone to fuck you, just say so! I’ll let you know if I’m into it.” Electra

Sexual health

Having conversations about sexual health is a healthy part of sexual relationships. Don’t assume trans women are at higher risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) just because they are transgender. Anyone who is having sex is potentially at risk of STIs. It’s good practice for everyone who is sexually active to get regular sexual health check-ups.

Tip: Asking if someone is “clean” implies that anyone who has HIV or an STI is somehow “dirty”. This is offensive and is likely to discourage potential partners. Instead, let them know when you had your last sexual health check-up and then ask if it’s ok to ask about theirs. If you are planning on having sex, discuss and agree together on what protection will be used (e.g. condoms).

Overly sexual conversations

Trans women can feel reduced to sexual objects when men jump straight into sexual conversations, fixate on a particular body part or make demands about dressing in a particular way. Take the time to get to know someone as a whole person and get to know other aspects of their life.

Sharing explicit pictures

If you want to share pictures of your private body parts or other sexual pictures, it's really important to ask permission first. If they say yes, tell them what is in the pictures and check-in again before sending them.

Don't share any pictures with other people in them, or take screenshots, pictures or videos without consent. In Australia this is unlawful. Respect their right to privacy.

It's ok to ask people to see private pictures if they have them. It is not OK to pressure anyone into sharing anything that they're uncomfortable with.

For more information on the laws in Australia relating to sharing or threatening to share images or videos without permission, [visit this link](#).

Commenting on appearances

Making comments about people's bodies or gender presentation can be really hurtful. Kindness, empathy and courtesy can go a long way in creating a safe and respectful online community and when meeting new people. Being cruel, vengeful or judgmental of others reflects poorly on you and can cause harm to others.

Meeting up

Meeting up with trans women can be fun, but you need to take into consideration their safety and wellbeing. Trans women may have had negative experiences with other men. Never pressure or demand trans women meet up with you. Instead, encourage her to do so in her own time and only if it's right for her. Asking her if there is anything you can do to make her feel more comfortable can help build trust and make the experience more enjoyable for you both.

Some trans women prefer to meet in a public place first. This can help build on mutual respect and ensure she feels safe to explore the connection in a more intimate setting.

If you're looking for support in Australia:

Qlife

National anonymous and confidential LGBTIQ+ peer support service (including partners)

Website: qlife.org.au

Phone: 1800 184 527

Opening hours: 3PM to midnight, every day
Telephone and web chat support service

Say It Out Loud

ACON's sexual, domestic and family violence website *Say It Out Loud* provides information and guidance relating to sexual, family and intimate partner violence in the Australian LGBTIQ+ community.

Website: sayitoutloud.org.au

Men's Referral Service

A free, confidential telephone service for men

Phone: 1300 766 491

Open any time.

For men outside Australia looking for counselling support, try searching online for "trans friendly counselling in my local area".