
DEVELOPING YOUR CHARACTER

How Orientation and Gender Identity Affect a Character's Personality

Most character worksheets list the standard items, name, age, physical description, sex, current occupation and then delve a bit deeper to help you flesh out your character. Gender is often left to a binary male/female and sexual orientation may or may not even be listed.

It is important to note that sexual orientations and gender identities are not a lifestyle choice. They are part of who that person is and are no more chosen than the color of their eyes. Some people do choose to cross-dress but that is gender performance, not gender identity. Sexuality is fluid and can change as a person gets older and experiences more in their life.

A person's gender and orientation impact every facet of their lives and can shape their personality traits, who they choose for friends, where they work, their family relationships, religion, how they dress and many other basic characterizations. Most importantly it can affect their personality traits either for the positive or the negative.

Your character might be naturally quirky but a strict upbringing or abusive one may temper that and make them more outwardly reserved or even cynical. A genderfluid character might struggle to remain optimistic when they are constantly pressured by their parents to conform to cultural gender expectations. A lesbian might end up being more appreciative and outgoing if she is raised by supportive parents.

When developing your character be wary about falling into the assumption trap. Double check to make sure you're not stereotyping or creating an inherently negative plot for your character as this can send the message that MOGAI persons can't have happy and/or fulfilling lives.

These questions are meant to be used in conjunction with your favorite character questionnaire to help you fill in the blanks on their gender identity and sexuality. This [character questionnaire](#) is one of the more comprehensive ones available. We recommend also consulting One Stop for Writers and their Positive and Negative Trait thesauri for help with your character.

Check Beyond the Rainbow for more specific information and questions under each module as it pertains to your character.

Questions

- Where was your character born? Is the area conservative or more liberal? What was the predominant attitude toward MOGAI persons? Does this have its basis in religion or superstition?
- Does your character still live there? Why or why not? What prompted this decision?
- What socio-economic status did your character grow up in, was their family poor or privileged? How did this affect their access to education, health care and basic necessities?
- At what age did your character realize their gender identity/sexual orientation? Did they tell anyone? Why or why not? If they did what was the response? How did they react to this reception?
 - If the response was positive what was their next step? Why did they decide to do this and how did it effect those around them?
 - If the response was negative how did this affect them? Did they decide to try to suppress their inclinations? If so, how successful were they and how did this affect their internal thought process and self-esteem?* Did they choose to defy their family/societal expectations? With what consequences? How did they deal with this?
- How does your character present their gender identity? Do they dress, style their hair, wear make-up a certain way? Is their personal style considered 'appropriate' according to society's definition? How would a stranger view them if they passed them on the street? Would they automatically assign them a binary gender or assume they are of a certain sexual orientation? Is this what the character wants? If not what is their reaction?
- What job does your character have? Is it a job they want? Is it one they feel is expected given their gender identity or sexual orientation? Did they have to settle for the job due to not being allowed other options because of their identity or orientation? Have they been turned down or fired from a job due to their identity or orientation? How did they handle this?
- Who does your character choose to surround themselves with? Who do they feel closest too? Do they try to find and associate with other MOGAI persons? Are they more comfortable around other MOGAI persons?
- How has their experience as a MOGAI person affected their outlook on life? Do they feel they have the same chances as non-MOGAI persons? What goals/dreams do they have? Have they had to adjust what they want due to being MOGAI? If so how has this affected them?

*Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-24 years. The risk increases dramatically when the person is MOGAI. (<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/facts-about-suicide>)