

Coming Out As YOU!
A Supplement to The Trevor Project's © "Coming Out As YOU!" Guide

"Coming Out" means sharing your sexual orientation and/or your gender identity with someone else. It can be incredibly affirming if things go well or hurtful if things do not. The thing to remember about coming out is it is something you do *for* you when you are ready.

WHAT Telling someone what your sexual orientation (i.e. a label that tells someone who you are attracted to) or gender identity (i.e. a label that tells someone how you identify – male/female/genderfluid/trans/etc.) can be very affirming and validating. The same label may mean different things to different people so it's okay to define yourself as you see yourself. You can come out to friends, family, to co-workers, teachers, etc. A person may be "out" in one environment (i.e. at school) but not another. What might surprise people is that you can come out many times using the same label or a new one.

WHY People come out for different reasons. They may be tired of hiding, want support, want to be accepted, want to feel free, want to be able to introduce their partner, or any number of reasons. Just make sure the reason is yours and you're only doing it for you.

WHO Who you come out to is no one's choice but yours. You can be out to some people and not others. Is the person likely to accept you and make you feel proud of who you are? If not, what are you hoping to gain by doing so?

WHEN You don't have to come out. It's a choice you make when you are ready to do so and when you want to do so. Your identity and orientation are not defined by how out you are. The important thing is to come out when it is safe to do so.

WHERE Where you come out is less important than knowing you're doing so in a place that is safe. You can be out in one place (like school) but not others (like home) if you choose to.

HOW This is the biggest question people have. You can come out on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, in Trevor Space, through text, in person, at home, at school, etc. The important thing to remember is there's no perfect way to come out, but it should be safe to do so. Unfortunately, not everyone you meet will be supportive and accepting. How does the person react to stories about LGBTQ equality and diversity in the news? Do they accept someone who is? How do you think they will respond when you come out? If the person is upset, will you be in danger or need to move out?

Step-by-Step

1. Decide **WHAT** you identify today as today. It's okay if it changes tomorrow or in the years to come.
2. Decide **WHY** you want to come out. If you don't have a reason, the time might not be right for you to do so.
3. Decide **WHO** you want to come out to.
4. Decide **HOW** you want to come out to them – in person, virtually, in a letter, etc.
5. Predict **HOW** they will respond. Will they be happy for you? Or angry?
6. Have a **safety plan** for if things don't go well – is there somewhere safe you can stay? Someone who you trust who you can call for help? Consider letting a friend know that you're planning on coming out and if you don't text them by a certain time you might need help because your safety might be in danger.
7. Practice **self-care**. Coming out can be stressful whether or not the response you receive is positive. It's important to take care of you. Listen to music, color, draw, talk to friends, cry in the shower, sip hot tea, take a nap, play with a pet, call The Trevor Lifeline.
8. Smile and be **proud** of who you are! You are worthy of acceptance and love and even if today you did not find it, tomorrow is another day. Remember you've known who you are for a long time and it might take others time to accept such. If you feel supported now, that's awesome. If you don't feel supported yet, know that how others see you doesn't change you or take away from your value.