

[edgemedianetwork.com](https://www.edgemedianetwork.com)

Merriam-Webster Updates Definition for 'Bisexual' | EDGE United States

by Matthew Perrone | Feb 5

3-4 minutes



September 24, 2020

[Kevin Schattenkirk](#) **READ TIME: 2 MIN.**

Just in time for Bisexual Visibility Day (which was celebrated yesterday), Merriam-Webster has updated its definition of "bisexual," making it less binary, [The Advocate reports](#).

The update comes after Robyn Ochs, a bisexual advocate, reached out to Merriam-Webster about updating the 2019 definition, which was:

"1a: possessing characters of both sexes and especially both male and female reproductive structures; 1b: of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to both men and women; 2: of, relating to, or involving both sexes."

The issue arose from the word "both," and the implication that bisexual attraction is binary. After a year, Ochs paired with GLAAD to lobby the publisher with an explanation that bisexual people can be attracted to, and fall in love with, non-binary individuals. [The Advocate notes](#) that, recently, an updated definition appeared on Merriam-Webster's website:

"...of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to people of one's same sex and of the opposite sex... of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to people of one's own gender identity and of other gender identities."

GLAAD and Ochs applauded the move, and also explained that the definition can still be further refined. In a [blog post on GLAAD's site](#), Ochs defines bisexuality as:

"...the potential to be attracted – romantically and/or sexually – to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree."

And GLAAD points to its Media Resource Guide for their definition, which also includes definitions from various LGBTQ and health organizations:

"A person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender or to those of another gender. People may experience this attraction in differing ways and degrees over their lifetime."

Rich Ferraro, GLAAD chief communications officer, praised Merriam-Webster for their "history of expanding and updating LGBTQ words," and contends that this current move will help "to create a more accurate and current understanding of bisexual+ people."

Kevin Schattenkirk is an ethnomusicologist and pop music aficionado.