



A-SPEC 101:

AN INTRODUCTION TO
IDENTITIES ON THE ASEXUAL
& AROMANTIC SPECTRUMS



**THE ACE
SPECTRUM
IS VAST
& DIVERSE**



GLOSSARY

Asexuality | 'ace': People who experience little to no sexual attraction.

Allosexual: People who experience sexual attraction.

Alloromantic: People who experience romantic attraction.

Aromantic | 'aro.': People who experience little to no romantic attraction.

A-spec: The spectrum of identities on the spectrum of asexuality and aromanticism.

For example, demi-sexual.

Cupioromantic: People who do not experience romantic attraction, but do want to be in a romantic relationship.

Demi-sexual: People who need to form an emotional bond with someone before they experience sexual attraction.

Demi-romantic: People who need to form an emotional bond with someone before they experience romantic attraction.

Queerplatonic Relationships: Committed, intimate relationships which are not romantic in nature.

Sexual Attraction: An interest or desire for sexual contact or interaction with a particular person

Romantic Attraction: An interest or desire for romantic contact or interaction with a particular person. This type of attraction often comes with strong feelings, and the wish to form a romantic relationship.

Ace-flux: A person whose level of asexuality varies. For example, they may sometimes experience sexual attraction, and at other times not at all.

Aro-flux: A person whose level of aromanticism varies. For example, they may sometimes experience romantic attraction, and at other times not at all.

Grey-ace: A person who is on the asexuality spectrum, somewhere between asexual and allosexual. What this looks like will be different for each individual.

Grey-aro: A person who is on the aromantic spectrum, somewhere between aromatic and alloromantic. What this looks like will be different for each individual.

A-SPEC 101:

This guide has been co-produced with young people aged between 13-25 who are asexual, aromantic and questioning their identity.

We hope this guide will provide an introduction that will help you to understand the aro/ace communities and how you can be great allies to them. We will cover different types of attraction, what being aro/ace looks like for different people, relationships, common misconceptions and how these harm aro/ace people.

We don't aim for this to be a definitive guide, but we hope it will be a good introduction. We have written this guide for people who aren't asexual or aromantic, but you may also find that some of these things apply to you. We have also included some resources for people who might be questioning their identity.



Different Types of Attraction

Before we get started, we wanted to introduce some definitions of sexual attraction and romantic attraction. These definitions will be important throughout the guide.

- ➔ Sexual attraction is ‘an interest or desire for sexual contact or interaction with a particular person’.
- ➔ Romantic attraction is ‘an interest or desire for romantic contact or interaction with a particular person. This type of attraction often comes with strong feelings, and the wish to form a romantic relationship with that person’. Reference: www.aromanticism.org
- ➔ A lot of people don’t really think about who they’re attracted to romantically and sexually as separate. For example, if you’re gay you might take it for granted that you will be attracted to the same gender both sexually and romantically.
- ➔ Many people in the aromantic and asexual communities find it helpful to separate the idea of romantic and sexual connections; romantic and sexual relationships.



For example, it is possible for people to want sexual relationships but not romantic ones – someone in this situation may describe themselves as aromantic. It is also possible to want romantic relationships but not sexual ones – someone in this situation may label themselves asexual. As we will go on to explain, there are lots of variations of experience in between these identities.

“It’s incredibly difficult to be what you can’t see. And often the small bits of representation of asexuality are portrayed incorrectly or only focus on one very small area of the asexuality spectrum.”

What does a-spec mean?

- ➔ Asexuality is a sexual orientation. It means experiencing little to no sexual attraction. This is sometimes abbreviated as 'ace.'
 - ➔ Aromanticism is a romantic orientation. It means experiencing little or no romantic attraction to anyone; not having romantic feelings. This is sometimes abbreviated as 'aro.'
 - ➔ 'Asexual' and 'aromantic' are umbrella terms, which means there are many identities included within the asexual and aromantic spectrums (you may see this referred to as a-spec*).
- For example, some people identify as demisexual. Demisexual people can experience sexual attraction to others, but they need to have formed an emotional bond with that person first.
- ➔ There are many ways you can be asexual or aromantic, no two people's experiences and feelings towards sex and relationships will be the same.
 - ➔ You may come across the terms 'allosexual' and 'alloromantic' used by ace and aro people, although these terms can be used by anyone.
- 'Allosexual' means someone who isn't asexual, and 'alloromantic' means someone who isn't aromantic.



“Not once did I know that asexuality was a thing, and even when I did learn the word in my late teenage years I was only told about the sex-repulsed side of sexuality so I never thought it applied to me – how wrong could I be!

Then I discovered the huge vastness of the asexuality spectrum and now for the first time I feel like I’m not the only one, I’m not a freak, I’m ok and don’t need fixed”.

SEXUAL

RELATIONSHIPS

Does being ace mean someone will never have sex?

Some asexual people may choose not to engage in sexual relationships at all, while others may choose to have sexual relationships. They may choose to have sex for many reasons, for example, to have children, or to feel close to their partner.

Will it be awkward to talk about sex with asexual people?

Talking about sex can feel awkward, especially if you aren't used to it. In a healthy relationship, it is important to learn how to talk openly about sex and boundaries, so that you can make sure that everyone is always consenting. Some asexual people don't like to talk about sex, and they shouldn't feel pressured to if they don't want to.

The most important thing is to find a way to discuss boundaries together so that you can treat one another with respect. Try asking your asexual partner what you can do to support them to feel comfortable chatting to you about it.

What do I do if I want to have sex, but my ace partner doesn't?

If your partner is ace and you know they don't want to have sex, it's important to respect this and not put any pressure on them to do something they don't want to do. It's also important for you to reflect on whether sex is something you want to have as part of your relationships.



Remember: Asexuality is a spectrum - ace people may not experience sexual attraction at all, it could come and go (see ace-flux), or they may experience sexual attraction in a limited way – either very rarely or with low intensity (see: grey-asexual or grey-ace).

Do aromantic people want relationships?

Some aromantic people choose not to engage in romantic relationships. This does not mean that aromantic people can't or won't have any important relationships in their lives. It is possible to have deep, meaningful, and loving relationships without any romance involved.

Some aromantic people might have romantic feelings in certain situations and these feelings might also come and go. Others may choose to be in a romantic relationship even if they don't experience romantic attraction – this is called cupioromantic.

Will my Aro partner love me?

There are lots of different kinds of love, and romantic love is only one. Some aro people may love you platonically, and that may be just as important and meaningful to them as romantic love is for you.

It is an asexual or aromantic person's choice if they want to engage in sex and relationships, so it is down to every individual and every couple to decide what works for them.

It's important to have a healthy discussion about the boundaries of the relationship to know what exactly everyone in the relationship is looking for and what everyone is comfortable with. This will help identify if you are compatible.



Queerplatonic relationships

This is a term you might come across when ace or aro people are talking about the relationships they have. A queerplatonic relationship is a committed non-romantic relationship that is different to what is usually expected of a friendship.

Queerplatonic relationships may feel more comfortable for asexual and aromantic people because they typically don't follow the assumed ideas of conventional romantic relationships. Some Queerplatonic couples live together, platonically marry, and have no romantic or sexual relations.

MYTHS &

MISCONCEPTIONS

There are many myths and misconceptions about asexual and aromantic identities.

Aphobia and arophobia is when people are prejudiced against asexual and aromantic people based on negative stereotypes. This can come from people inside and outside the LGBTQ+ community.

These are some of the harmful misconceptions that ace and aro people often hear:

‘You haven’t found the right person yet’

This implies that aro/ace people are wrong, or incapable of being with someone while being aro/ace. It also implies that it wouldn’t be ok if aro/ace people never wanted to be with a partner. Aro/ace people can live full and happy lives without ever being in a romantic relationship or wanting to have sex.

‘Ace people are not attracted to anyone’

Asexuality is a spectrum. This means that some asexual people experience no sexual attraction, and this is completely valid. Others may only experience this in certain circumstances, for example if they have a strong emotional connection. This is called demisexual. Asexual people may also experience romantic attraction as not all ace people are aromantic – these are two different identities.

“I’ve had people make fun of or tell me I need medical/mental help after coming out as asexual.”

'Ace people hate sex'

While some ace people hate sex and feel repulsed by the idea, others will want to have sex. Not all ace people experience no attraction at all, some can have a very low amount of attraction or only experience sexual attraction in certain circumstances. Each person is different.

'Aromantic people will never get married'

Aro people can still get married if they choose to. People who are demi or gray-romantic may feel romantic attraction occasionally or only after forming a strong friendship attachment, so may want to for traditional reasons (i.e., for romantic love). People in a queerplatonic relationship may want to get married due to the financial and legal benefits of getting married in the UK.

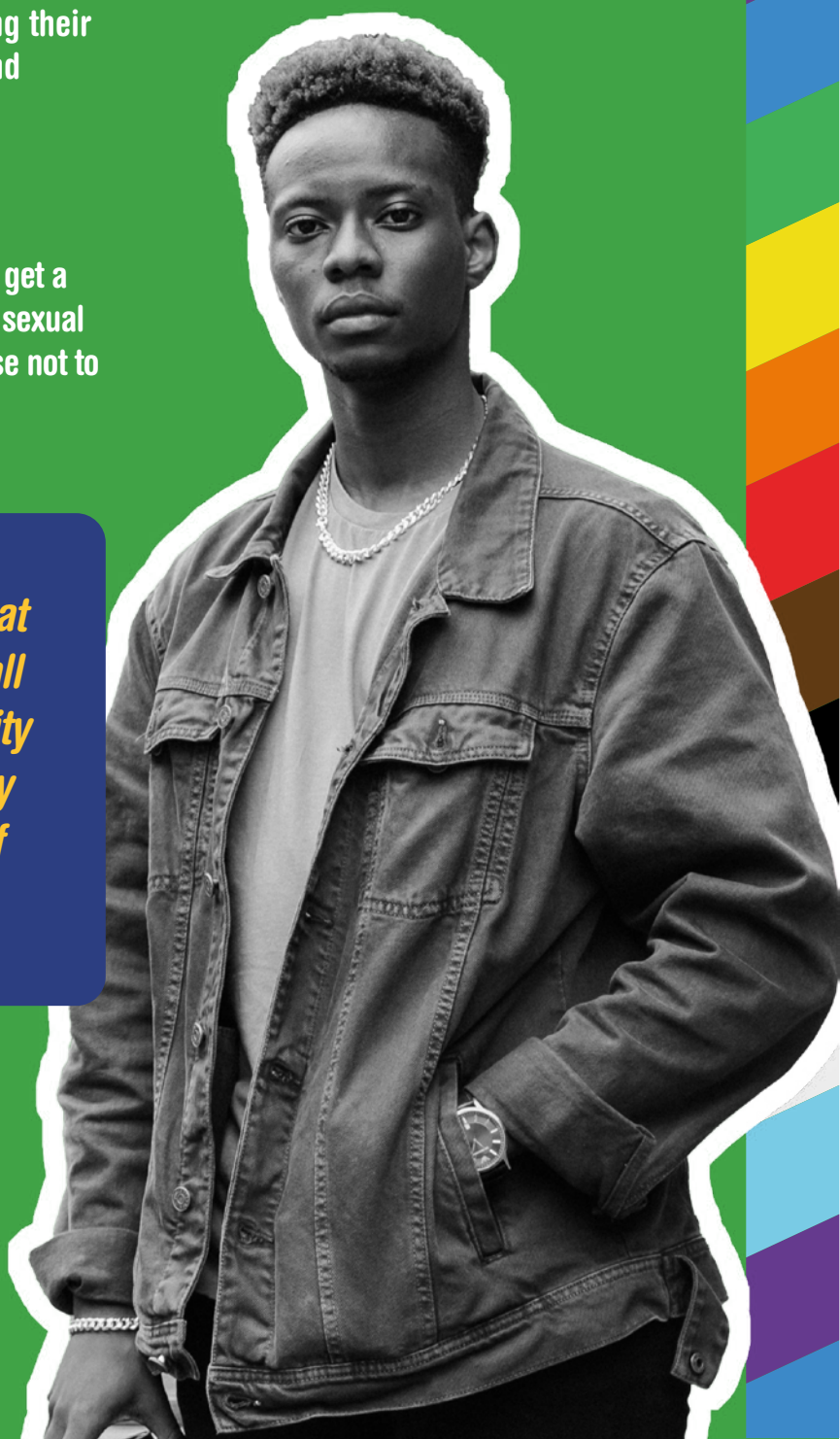
'Aro/Ace people are broken'

An aro/ace person is not broken, they are still capable of having close connections with people, living their lives, and doing everything else allosexual and alloromantic people do (if they want to).

'Aro/Ace people are robots'

Aro/ace people are human, they are still able to get a job, experience emotions, get married and have sexual relationships (if they want to). Those who choose not to are not robots either!

"It's incredibly difficult to be what you can't see. And often the small bits of representation of asexuality are portrayed incorrectly or only focus on one very small area of the asexuality spectrum."



Things you can do to be an ally to ace and aro people:

Do some research

This guide is designed to be an introduction to the ace and aro spectrums, there is much more to learn! Doing some research can take the pressure off aro/ace people to explain themselves and their identities.

Be mindful of how you talk about sex and relationships

There is a lot of societal pressure to be having sex or to be in a relationship and many people might not want either of these things - this includes aro people too! Saying things like 'you'll change your mind when you're older' or 'you just haven't met the right person' can be frustrating to hear and can make someone feel pressured and upset.

Don't ask intrusive questions about sex or relationships

If you find out someone is aro/ace it's not okay to start asking them questions about sex and relationships unless you've agreed to chat about this. Don't assume that people are going to want certain kinds of relationships and support them with the ones they do want.

Offer some support

If someone comes out to you as aro/ace they've probably been thinking about this for a while and are trusting you to be a safe person to tell. Take them seriously and ask them what they need.





PLACES TO

GET SUPPORT

LGBT Youth Scotland

If you're a young person (13-25) in Scotland, you can get support from a youth worker via our [Live Chat](#) service.

You could also join one of our groups. You can find more information about those here or email us at info@lgbtyouth.org.uk

Stonewall

You can find out more from the Asexual Visibility [Ace Hub](#) | [Stonewall](#)

lgbtyouth.org.uk @lgbtys



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