

Here you will find a condensed D/s glossary. Be aware, the limitation of definitions is that context largely defines meaning.. We will try to define the context first, the definition second. You will see these words all over the site, and if you find yourself unsure of context or expression, please refer back to this page.

This is not a comprehensive definition list; it only pertains to words and phrases used on this site. For a more complete list of definitions concerning BDSM, fetish, kink, etc., visit the Deviant's Dictionary.

24/7 - In terms of a D/s relationship, this acronym stands for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It identifies a relationship with round-the-clock Dominant and submissive dynamics.

bisexual - In terms of both BDSM and D/s, this is an adjective used to describe a person (or oneself) as having sexual attraction to both sexes. (See pansexual, heterosexual, and homosexual.)

BDSM - In the terms of sexual interactions and physical demonstrations, this acronym stands for Bondage, Discipline, Sadism and Masochism. It refers to the acts of, or participating in activities that include:

Bondage: the practice of being restrained, physically, by the means of devices such as cuffs or rope.

Discipline: refers to the process of punishing or being punished.

Sadism: coined as a term in reference to the Marquis de Sade, this term refers to deriving pleasure or personal gratification from causing or being a part of causing pain, suffering, or cruelty in a variety of degrees.

Masochism: coined as a term in reference to Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, (author of Venus in Furs); this term is associated with receiving pleasure from mental, emotional, or physical pain or humiliation, also in varying degrees,

Bottom - In the terms of BDSM scenes or interactions, this word refers to the person who takes on the submissive role for the duration of a scene. This term is associated with being on the receiving end of bondage, discipline, and sadism. (Note: this term has significant connotative differences from submissive or slave.) See Top.

Consent - In the terms of BDSM, this word means the give permission to planned occurrences (such as to consent to being blindfolded). In terms of D/s, the word refers to giving agreement to situations and decisions at the discretion of the Dominant (although the agreement may define specific restrictions).

Consensual non-consent - In D/s or M/s relationships, this refers to the type of agreement made between a Dominant and submissive party, stipulating that the submissive has consented to the Dominant's decisions and puts him/herself in the care of the Dominant. This type of agreement is not to be taken lightly. The submissive party in these types of relationships typically becomes a slave, relinquishing personal freedoms and rights to the Dominant's discretion.

D/s - In context of relationships and social interactions, this acronym stands for Dominance and submission.

Dominance (also called Domination) - In terms of BDSM and D/s, this term refers to taking control of a person or situation through usage of some means (such as physical, mental, financial, etc), or to exercise this power. A person who exercises this power on a regular basis, outside of BDSM scenes, is called a Dominant; the gender specific titles being Dom for a man, Domme or Dominatrix for a woman.

Submission - In BDSM and D/s, this refers to the act of yielding to something or someone; also refers to the state of submitting. This may be through the manipulation of a Dominant or Top. Typically, someone who submits on a regular basis, outside of a BDSM scene, is referred to as a submissive. Submissives who submit to an extreme degree are called slaves.

Etiquette - In terms of D/s, forms and practices that will rule the interactions between community members, Dominants and submissives, and between those involved in a relationship. Because of the authority structure in D/s, often the etiquette a submissive or slave adheres to is much stricter than interactions between vanilla individuals. Example of such etiquette: using Sir or Ma'am when speaking to Dominants.

Femdom - In both BDSM and D/s, this term refers to Female Domination, or when a woman is a Dominant partner. A female Dominant is referred to as a Domme or Dominatrix. (Other monikers include Domme, Dominatrix, Miss, Mistress, Ma'am, etc.)

Heterosexual - In terms of BDSM and D/s, this term refers to having a sexual or relationship preference for members of the opposite sex.

Homosexual - In terms of BDSM and D/s, this word describes a person as having a sexual or relationship preference of members of the same sex.

Lifestyle D/s - A lifestyle (an individual's typical way of life), where D/s is a principal element in day-to-day living, and where final authority for the majority of significant life decisions rests with the Dominant in the relationship. (See Total Power Exchange.)

Limit - In BDSM, this refers to an activity or fetish that a person will refuse to participate in; in D/s, it refers to the same as BDSM, but a much larger scope, extending to everyday life (for instance, refusing to allow a Dominant to choose clothing). Limits are often a topic of discussion between Doms and subs who may potentially engage in a relationship, defining the types and degrees of limits. Hard limits are limits that are firm, and not mutable with circumstance; soft limits are negotiable under certain circumstances.

M/s - Refers to D/s relationships; this acronym stands for Master and slave. It refers to a type of relationship that is a serious commitment, often long-term, and in some cases may be 'consensual

non-consent'. While this is not true of all M/s relationships, a large majority of them are involved 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (also called 24/7), and have detailed contracts or agreements.

Maledom - In both BDSM and D/s, this refers to Male Domination, or when a man is a Dominant partner. A male Dominant is referred to as a Dom. (Other monikers are Dom, Sir, Master, Daddy, etc.)

Old Guard (or OG) - Historical reference to the original Gay Leather BDSM scene of the 60's; characterized by strict discipline and rules, and a close-knit exclusive community that tried to protect its members from the media.

Pansexual - In both BDSM and D/s, this is a term used to describe a person with sexual or activity preferences with all genders and orientations, or an organization or community that caters to all orientations, genders, activities. ["DC's Black Rose organization is pansexual, welcoming anyone and everyone."]

Power exchange (PE) - In both BDSM and D/s, this is an imprecise term. 'Power' is the ability that affects the world around you. This term is associated with a submissive exchanging his/her authority to make decisions (whether just for a scene, or for his/her entire life), for the Dominant's agreement to take responsibility for his/her happiness and health. (See Total Power Exchange)

Sadomasochism - Term coined by Sigmund Freud. In dealing with BDSM, this term is applied to individuals who derive pleasure from the pain and humiliation inflicted on others, or on themselves.

SSC - In terms of BDSM, this acronym stands for Safe, Sane and Consensual. Originally offered to the media in the early 80's as a description for BDSM activities as to make the general public feel at ease about such "dangerous and unhealthy" practices. (See Joseph Bean's essay on this topic.)

Safeword - A term in BDSM that relates to a word or phrase used for communication in a scene. Most commonly, a safeword is used by the submissive to end a scene because of pain or other problems. When not previously discussed, three conventional terms are used in scenes; "green" for "Go ahead, I'm fine," "yellow" for "Slow down," and "red" for "Stop immediately."

Scene - This term applies to mostly BDSM; a division of time that encapsulates a BDSM activity, ranging from a few minutes to several hours. Also used as a verb, as to "scene" with someone implies that you have been or will be involved with someone for the scene. Alternatively, this term has been applied to the BDSM community's more public gatherings or the state the community is in. ["The scene around Houston is very active."]

Slave - A term is often used synonymously with bottom or sub. Connotatively it refers to very involved D/s relationships; a person who has surrendered their personal property and freedoms to another, who has become the property or chattel of their owner(s). This term is widely used, as it has a certain self-affirming weight. The difference between submissive and slave is the degree of submission. For more on this, see the article of Degrees of Submission.

Submissive -- In D/s relationships, a submissive is a person who retains freedoms and rights, but submits or potentially submits to another in areas wider than BDSM scenes. Within a BDSM only context submissive is synonymous with 'bottom'. Submissives can vary in how serious they take their position, training, and situation.

Switch -- In relation to BDSM, a switch is associated with a person who has a preference for being both submissive and Dominant in their BDSM activities (not necessarily at the same time).

Top -- A common expression in BDSM for a person who takes on the Dominant role for the duration of a scene. This term is associated with being on the administering end of sadism, bondage, and discipline.

Total Power Exchange (TPE) is a derivative of the concept of power exchange and again is imprecise wording. However, the term refers to a relationship where the Dominant has complete authority and influence over the submissive's life, making the majority of decisions. (See Lifestyle D/s.)

Toy is a term relating to the physical objects used in and around the scene, such as whips, paddles, cuffs, and floggers.

Vanilla -- A term coined by the BDSM and D/s communities to describe the "normal" (non-BDSM or non-D/s). It is used to illustrate a division of communities and ideas, as many "vanilla" people are adverse to the concepts of BDSM and D/s in general.