

DO NOT USE THESE WORDS!

Offensive: "homosexual" (n. or adj.)

Preferred: "gay" (adj.); "gay man" or "lesbian" (n.); "gay person/people"

Please use gay or lesbian to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. Because of the clinical history of the word "homosexual," it is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered – notions discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Please avoid using "homosexual" except in direct quotes. Please also avoid using "homosexual" as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word "gay." The Associated Press, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* restrict use of the term "homosexual" (see [AP & New York Times Style](#)).

Offensive: "homosexual relations/relationship," "homosexual couple," "homosexual sex," etc.

Preferred: "relationship," "couple" (or, if necessary, "gay couple"), "sex," etc.

Identifying a same-sex couple as "a homosexual couple," characterizing their relationship as "a homosexual relationship," or identifying their intimacy as "homosexual sex" is extremely offensive and should be avoided. These constructions are frequently used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate gay people, couples and relationships.

As a rule, try to avoid labeling an activity, emotion or relationship gay, lesbian, or bisexual unless you would call the same activity, emotion or relationship "straight" if engaged in by someone of another orientation. In most cases, your readers, viewers or listeners will be able to discern people's sexes and/or orientations through the names of the parties involved, your depictions of their relationships, and your use of pronouns.

Offensive: "sexual preference"

Preferred: "sexual orientation" or "orientation"

The term "sexual preference" is typically used to suggest that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice and therefore can and should be "cured." *Sexual orientation* is the accurate description of an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex and is inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, as well as straight men and women (see [AP & New York Times Style](#)).

Offensive: "gay lifestyle" or "homosexual lifestyle"

Preferred: "gay lives," "gay and lesbian lives"

There is no single lesbian, gay or bisexual lifestyle. Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are diverse in the ways they lead their lives. The phrase "gay lifestyle" is used to denigrate lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals suggesting that their orientation is a choice and therefore can and should be "cured" (See [AP & New York Times Style](#)).

Offensive: "admitted homosexual" or "avowed homosexual"

Preferred: "openly lesbian," "openly gay," "openly bisexual," or simply "out"

Dated term used to describe those who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. The words "admitted" or "avowed" suggest that being gay is somehow shameful or inherently secretive. You may also simply describe the person as being out, for example: "Ricky Martin is an out pop star from Puerto Rico." Avoid the use of the word "homosexual" in any case (see [AP & New York Times Style](#)).

Offensive: "gay agenda" or "homosexual agenda"

Preferred: Accurate descriptions of the issues (e.g., "inclusion in existing non-discrimination and hate crimes laws," "ending the ban on transgender service members")

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are motivated by the same hopes, concerns and desires as other everyday Americans. They seek to be able to earn a living, be safe in their communities, serve their country, and take care of the ones they love. Their commitment to equality is one they share with many allies and advocates who are not LGBT. Notions of a so-called "homosexual agenda" are rhetorical inventions of anti-gay extremists seeking to create a climate of fear by portraying the pursuit of equal opportunity for LGBT people as sinister (see [AP & New York Times Style](#)).

Offensive: "special rights"

Preferred: "equal rights" or "equal protection"

Anti-gay extremists frequently characterize equal protection of the law for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people as "special rights" to incite opposition to such things as relationship recognition and inclusive non-discrimination laws (see [AP & New York Times Style](#)).

DEFAMATORY LANGUAGE

"fag," "faggot," "dyke," "homo," "sodomite," and similar epithets

The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. So that such words are not given credibility in the media, it is preferred that reporters say, "The

person used a derogatory word for a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person."

"deviant," "disordered," "dysfunctional," "diseased," "perverted," "destructive" and similar descriptions

The notion that being gay, lesbian or bisexual is a psychological disorder was discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Today, words such as "deviant," "diseased" and "disordered" often are used to portray LGBT people as less than human, mentally ill, or as a danger to society. Words such as these should be avoided in stories about the gay community. If they must be used, they should be quoted directly in a way that clearly reveals the bias of the person being quoted.

Associating gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people with pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest

Being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is neither synonymous with, nor indicative of, any tendency toward pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest. Such claims, innuendoes and associations often are used to insinuate that LGBT people pose a threat to society, to families, and to children in particular. Such assertions and insinuations are defamatory and should be avoided, except in direct quotes that clearly reveal the bias of the person quoted.

SOURCE: GLAAD <https://www.glaad.org/reference/offensive>