

Terms to Avoid

OFFENSIVE	PREFERRED
<p>"homosexual" (n. or adj.)</p> <p><i>Because of the clinical history of the word "homosexual," it is aggressively used by anti-LGBTQ extremists to suggest that people attracted to the same sex 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, Reuters, & New York Times Style).</i></p>	<p>"gay" (adj.); "gay man" or "lesbian" (n.); "gay person/people"</p> <p><i>Please use gay, lesbian, or when appropriate bisexual or queer to describe people attracted to members of the same sex.</i></p>
<p>"homosexual relations/relationship," "homosexual couple," "homosexual sex," etc.</p> <p><i>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-LGBTQ extremists to denigrate LGBTQ people, couples, and relationships.</i></p>	<p>"relationship," "couple" (or, if necessary, "gay/lesbian/same-sex couple"), "sex," etc.</p> <p><i>As a rule, try to avoid labeling an activity, emotion, or relationship gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer 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</i></p>

	<p><i>relationships, and your use of pronouns.</i></p>
<p>"sexual preference"</p> <p><i>The term "sexual preference" is typically used to suggest that being attracted to the same sex is a choice and therefore can and should be "cured."</i></p>	<p>"sexual orientation" or "orientation"</p> <p><i>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, and queer people, as well as straight men and women (see AP, Reuters, & New York Times Style).</i></p>
<p>"gay lifestyle," "homosexual lifestyle," or "transgender lifestyle"</p> <p><i>There is no single LGBTQ lifestyle. LGBTQ people are diverse in the ways they lead their lives. The phrases "gay lifestyle," "homosexual lifestyle," and "transgender lifestyle" are used to denigrate LGBTQ people suggesting that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (see Transgender Glossary of Terms) is a choice and therefore can and should be "cured" (see AP, Reuters, & New York Times Style).</i></p>	<p>"LGBTQ people and their lives"</p>
<p>"admitted homosexual" or "avowed homosexual"</p> <p><i>Dated terms used to describe those who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. The words "admitted" or "avowed" suggest that being attracted to the</i></p>	<p>"out gay man," "out lesbian," or "out queer person"</p> <p><i>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, Reuters, & New York Times Style).</i></p>

<p><i>same sex is somehow shameful or inherently secretive.</i></p>	
<p>"gay agenda" or "homosexual agenda" <i>Notions of a so-called "homosexual agenda" are rhetorical inventions of anti-LGBTQ extremists seeking to create a climate of fear by portraying the pursuit of equal opportunity for LGBTQ people as sinister (see AP, Reuters, & New York Times Style).</i></p>	<p>"Accurate descriptions of the issues (e.g., "inclusion in existing nondiscrimination laws," "securing equal employment protections") <i>LGBTQ 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 and acceptance is one they share with many allies and advocates who are not LGBTQ.</i></p>
<p>"special rights" <i>Anti-LGBTQ extremists frequently characterize equal protection of the law for LGBTQ people as "special rights" to incite opposition to such things as relationship recognition and inclusive nondiscrimination laws (see AP, Reuters, & New York Times Style). As such, the term should be avoided.</i></p>	<p>"equal rights" or "equal protection"</p>

! 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/transgender/queer person."

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

The notion that being LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ people as less than human, mentally ill, or as a danger to society. Words such as these should be avoided in stories about the LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ people with pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest

Being LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ 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.