

# LGBTQI VOCABULARY

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# WELCOME!

Hi! Thank you for downloading this guide to **LGBTQI vocabulary**.

Before we get started, let me introduce myself. I'm David, the creator of [Get Into English](#), a website for learners of English.

One of my goals is to present to you lots of **natural English vocabulary** used in both small talk and deeper extended conversation.

I also would like to cover some topics and ideas which are not included in mainstream English coursebooks and blogs.

This first guide is connected to the discussion surrounding **gay and lesbian issues**. Regardless of where you stand, it's a widely-discussed topic in Australia, and if you'd like to contribute to the conversation, here is an extensive list of words, phrases and other collocations you can use.

One last thing - this guide is **suitable for adults or mature audiences**. Please do not read if you're not comfortable with adult themes.

Please feel to leave a comment on the original [blog article](#) once you've finished and I hope you find this helpful!

Best wishes

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**Disclaimer:** This is a list of vocabulary for learning English. It should not be taken as any kind of medical, legal or any other kind of professional advice.

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# TYPES OF PEOPLE



People who are **heterosexual** are attracted to the opposite sex. They are sometimes called **straight** or **hetero** (ie when a man and a woman are together).

The term **LGBTQI** refers to people who are **lesbian**, **gay**, **bisexual**, **transgender**, **queer** (or **questioning**) and **intersex**.

Men who are attracted to other men are called **gay** or **homosexual**. These days the word 'homosexual' is used in more official situations (eg a scientist might talk about homosexuality) and can sound a little negative in regular conversation.

'Gay' can also be used by women who are attracted to other women. Often though they are called **lesbians**.

A **bisexual** is attracted to both men and women, though not necessarily at the same time.

Someone who is **transgender** (*noun*. uncountable; *adj* transgendered) identifies as someone of a different gender than their assigned sex. For example, maybe someone was born a biological female, but feels male. Being transgender is separate though to **sexual orientation** - for example, a transgender person

might identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or asexual just like heterosexual people (or in fact, they might not identify with any of the above).

Please note that the word **transexual** is used less within the community these days.

A person who is **asexual** does not show any interest in sex.

A person who is **intersex** has sexual characteristics that do not fit the usual definition of male or female. The Australian Government describes intersex as: (a) neither wholly female nor wholly male; or (b) a combination of female and male; or (c) neither female nor male (source: see note 1 in the appendix).

A **metrosexual** is a straight man who likes things which are traditionally (and perhaps stereotypically) connected to gays such as expensive or branded clothing, moisturisers, caring much more about appearance and looks, etc.

An **ubersexual** is a straight man who also takes care of his appearance, but is considered more masculine. Similarly, so it a **lumbersexual**. They are men who might have a beard, wear plaid shirts, boots and regular or designer jeans.

A **transvestite** is someone who likes to dress in clothes of the opposite sex, often for sexual pleasure.

A **pansexual** is someone who is attracted to others regardless of gender (this definition goes beyond male or female). **Omnisexuals** are similar, attracted to all people regardless of gender. The difference apparently is that pansexuals care less about gender. "Hearts not parts" is a slogan that some pansexuals and omnisexuals use to describe their preferences.

A person who is **androgynous** can look either male or female. Some pop stars are like this, perhaps a pretty boy band singer or for example Texas singer Sharleen Spiteri.

# TYPES OF GAY MEN



There's A LOT! Here are a few:

A **geek** is a gay man who is more intellectual, perhaps wears glasses and reads books and so on. The photo above is an example of a geek.

Geeks can also be seen in heterosexual society. The TV hit 'Big Bang Theory' started as a story of 4 geeks who met the lovely blonde, Penny.

A **bear** is a gay man who looks masculine, often has a beard and grows hair on his chest (and, er, back). Just like a bear!

A **bear chaser** is a man who wants to go out with a bear.

An **otter** is a slightly smaller version of a bear. They may have hair and sport a beard, but an otter is generally more 'toned down' than a bear.

# TYPES OF GAY MEN

A **cub** is a hairy gay man who is much younger than a bear.

A **chub** is an overweight or obese gay man.

A **jock** is a gay man who works out, is muscular and usually clean-shaven. 'Jocks' are in mainstream society under a different meaning: to refer to men who are very sporty and often stupid or arrogant and who date the local cheerleaders.

A **bull** is also very sporty, but in particular works out a lot and is very big and muscular.

A **twink** is a young gay man who is very slim, quite boyish looking, with no body hair.

A **pup** is similar to a twink but is considered naive or innocent, with little experience in the gay world.

A **daddy** is an older man who is well-off or who has a good income.

This word can also be used to describe either a gay man or a straight man who 'looks after' their partner financially. There are even some websites where a sugar babe can find a sugar daddy.

A **queen** is a gay person who is effeminate, and usually older, and a little dramatic. Elton John is sometimes called this. Within the gay community, there can be some negativity towards queens.

A **top** is a gay man who is more **dominant** during sex.

A **bottom** is a gay man who is more submissive.

A **Poz** is someone who is HIV positive.

# TYPES OF LESBIANS



A **dyke** is another word used for lesbian. When used within the community, it's ok, but can be used in a negative way by people in mainstream society.

A **tomboy** is a woman who acts in a more masculine or 'dominant' manner. Often she looks more masculine in how she is built; however, women who are classically 'slim and pretty' can also identify as tomboys.

A straight woman can be a tomboy, preferring to hang around guys or take part in activities and sports that guys usually play. You might hear a woman say:

"I was a bit of tomboy when I was younger. I preferred to play soccer with the boys than hang around the girls."

A **butch lesbian** is also someone who is considered more masculine or dominant. 'Butch' can also be used for gay men.



# TYPES OF LESBIANS

A **femme** is used to describe a feminine lesbian, the stereotypical 'feminine woman' often the subject of straight male fantasies.

A **lipstick lesbian** is similar. These **femmy** women like make up a lot, buying nice clothing, wearing more trendy or stylish dresses and so on.

A **blue jeans femme** is similar to the lipstick lesbian, but prefers to be more casual and laid back in her clothing and appearance.

A **gold star lesbian** is someone who has never slept with a man.

A **pillow queen** is someone who likes to be pleasured during sex, but doesn't like to give pleasure. This term is used more for women. However, a **pillow biter** can be used to describe a homosexual man. It's considered pejorative, and is inspired from 'biting the pillow' during sex.





# OTHER TERMS

**Queer** originally meant 'strange' but then it was used negatively to describe gays. Nowadays some LGBTQI people are trying to reclaim (= take back) this word in a positive way to describe the community. I believe it's used more within the community in a positive way, but if a straight person uses it, it might cause offence depending on how it's said.

Words which are considered offensive or **pejorative** and indeed rude – but which you might hear in hip-hop songs or in movies – include **poof**, **homo**, and **fag**. I think 'homo' is quite out of date now, the only time I hear it these days is when one straight male friend compliments another straight male:

"No homo, but you're looking good in that shirt."

Fag (from '**faggot**') was originally used just in the USA, but with time and cultural references in TV shows, songs and movies, it's crossed over to other English-speaking countries. When I was in the UK in the 1990s it was fairly common for Brits to use it as a play on words (as 'fag' in Britain means 'cigarette'). Once a manager of mine joked:

"Back in a sec. Just going out for a quick fag..."

**Flaming** or **flaming homosexual** is used to say that someone is obviously gay. It can be used negatively, but also within the community to talk about someone who is clearly gay (and easily detectable with your **gaydar**).

**Straight-acting** is usually used for a man who seems heterosexual based on his behaviour but in fact he's gay.

**Gay-friendly** – this term is used by some cafes, hotels, restaurants, and other venues to specifically communicate that LGBTQI people are welcome and can feel safe.

# OTHER TERMS

**Straight-friendly** – this can be used humorously by gays to say that a gay venue (eg cafe, bar, club) welcomes straights. On the other hand, it's also been used by at least one straight woman to say that her place (on Airbnb) is only for straights and excludes gays (source: appendix 2).

A **gaydar** – a gay person who is good at spotting another gay person is said to have a good gaydar (combining 'gay' and 'radar'). This word is often used humorously.

A **darkroom** - this is a place usually downstairs at a gay cafe, bar or club where men go and have sex. This area can also be known as a **backroom**. The area is divided into separate smaller rooms, some including private cabins or open areas where men can, er, mingle, and then have sex. The darkroom might also be so dark that you can't see the person you're having sex with.

A **sauna** is a men-only place with facilities for relaxation and meeting other men, as well as for having sex.

**Cruising** - this is the act of looking for a sexual partner. It can be in gay darkrooms or public places which are known to attract gay men, such as parks and beaches (called **gay beats**). A gay man will walk around and make eye contact with another one while 'cruising'.

A **yestergay** - an ex-gay. Someone who used to identify as being gay, but now considers themselves straight. Likewise, a **hasbien** is a woman who used to identify as a lesbian (from 'has-been' and 'lesbian').

A **beersexual** - a girl who only sleeps with other women when drunk or under the influence of alcohol.

A **drag queen** - a man who dresses up in woman's clothing in order to entertain others. Some gay and lesbian clubs have drag queens performing a show, often singing or miming famous pop songs.

# OTHER TERMS



**Bi-curious** - a straight girl (or guy) who has fantasies to **hook up with** someone of the same sex. It could also be for someone who would like to sleep with someone of the opposite sex.

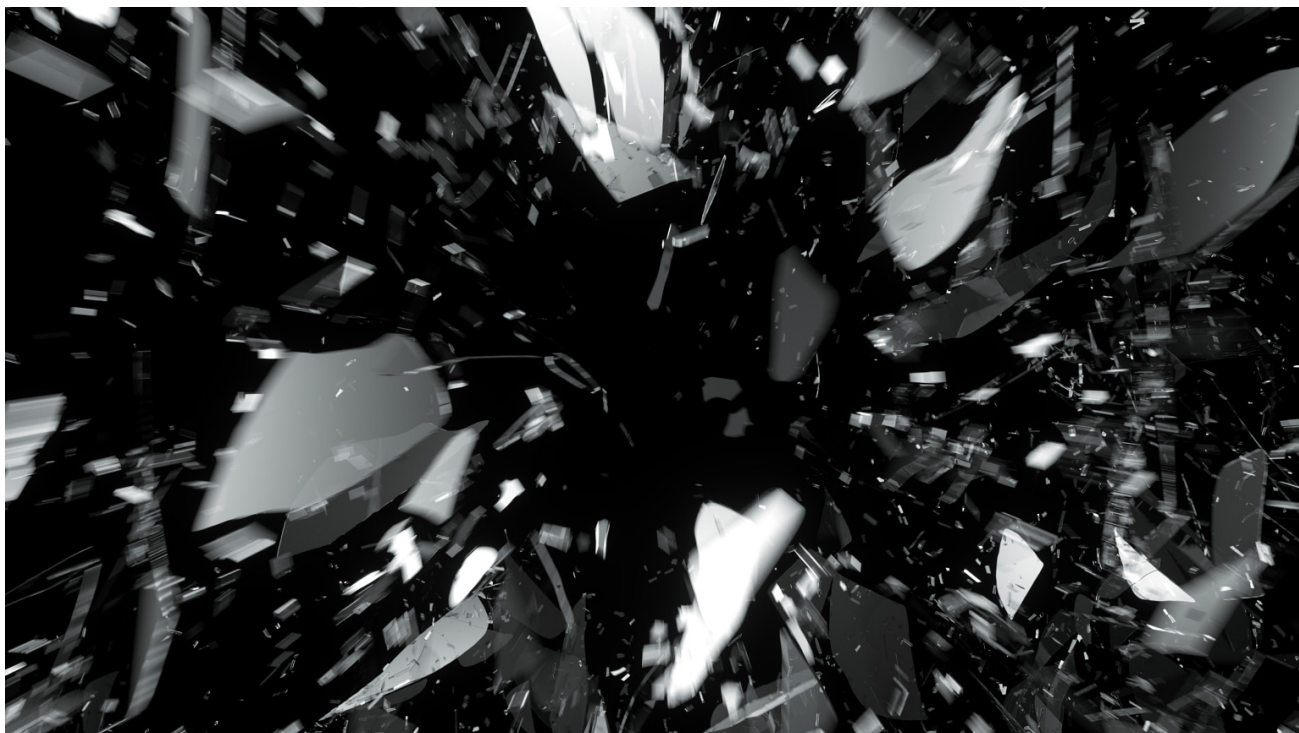
**Friendcest** - when you sleep with one of your friends. This word comes from 'incest' and can be used humorously.

**Gayborhood** - a mix of 'gay' and 'neighbourhood'. An area of a city where there are a lot of gay and lesbian people.

**Gayelle** - this is a word that some lesbians would like to be known as. For some it sounds more positive than 'lesbian.'



# HOMOPHOBIA



**Homophobic** describes someone who doesn't like or fears or even hates people who are gay

nb words ending in *-phobic* involve a fear or dislike of something.

Collocations include:

**Homophobic slurs** (a 'slur' is remark which is negative or intended to offend or insult someone. Just like 'racial slurs')

**Homophobic bullying** – when someone is picked on either verbally or physically based on their sexual orientation (or perceived orientation)

A **homophobic attack** – this can also be verbal or physical. On this note, **gay bashing** describes violence towards gays.

A **homophobic gesture** is when someone moves their hands in a way that is rude: "Footballer Colin Kazim-Richards found guilty over homophobic gesture to fans while playing for Blackburn Rovers" (source: appendix 3)

# HOMOPHOBIA

**Homophobic hate crime** – A 'hate crime' is when a violent or threatening act is made towards someone who is LGBTQI or another minority group in society.

A **homophobic insult** is when someone says something which is offensive or insulting to a person who is gay (or believed to be gay).

**Homophobic violence** is also a common word for when someone is physically attacked.

A **homophobic bigot** is someone who very judgmental or negative or hateful towards LGBT people.

Interestingly **bible bashing** is used negatively to say a Christian is trying to impose their beliefs on others, whereas **gay bashing** describes violence *against* gay people.

There are many websites in Australia against homophobia, including **No To Homophobia**.

## Cultural References:

Christina Aguilera had a big hit with '**Beautiful**', written by a gay song-writer and which seeks to support those who have been bullied or ridiculed.

'**Don't Wait**' is a popular song on YouTube by Joey Graceffa:

"Don't wait for the world to be ready."

Hayley Kiyoko's song '**Girls Like Girls**' also tackles the negative reactions from when gays and lesbians **come out**.

Macklemore addresses what it's like to be gay in their popular song '**Same Love**.'

# WORDS USED IN POLITICS

The **Gay Agenda** is a pejorative term used by opponents to say that LGBTQI people are trying to take over or control certain elements in society in order to influence mainstream opinion, the media and politics.

These opponents say the **homosexual mafia** will demonise anyone, especially celebrities or politicians, who disagree with their stances and views. The Gay Agenda is specifically said to target Christians, who are perceived to be behind the times and who express strong disapproval towards the **gay lifestyle**.

**Same-sex marriage** (or gay marriage) is a topic of major discussion throughout the English-speaking world, especially in Australia, the USA and the UK. You'll also hear the terms **marriage equality** and **equal marriage**.

**Discrimination** – if someone feels that they have been **discriminated against**, this is when they have been treated unfairly by someone or an organisation or government authority based on their sexuality (anti-discrimination laws usually refer to sexuality, religion, and race in promoting equality in society).

**Harassment** – In a place of work someone may feel they are being harassed. This means that they receive annoying comments from others. Countries like Australia have laws against **sexual harassment**.

**Gay rights** - the general term used to promote human rights and equality for LGBTQI people.

**Religious rights** - especially in the USA there is a discussion concerning the beliefs of religious people. For example, if an owner of a business doesn't wish to help provide for a gay wedding because it's against their religious beliefs, should the state be involved?

**Gay pride** - the idea that LGBTQI should not be afraid, and that they should be proud of who they are. Some cities around the world have gay pride events such as parades.



# IDIOMS + EXPRESSIONS



**To come out (of the closet)** – to tell your friends and/or family that you are gay or lesbian or bisexual or part of the LGBTQI community; to make it known to others that you are gay or lesbian. You **have your coming out**:

“It was really nervous when I came out to my parents, but they were actually cool with it.”

Likewise, someone can still be **in the closet** or be a **closet gay**.

# IDIOMS + EXPRESSIONS

**To out someone/to be outed** – when a gay political group or the media decide to tell the public that someone, often a celebrity or politician, is gay. This is done without the knowledge or approval of the person concerned, and it might not be true that the person is gay. This headline is an example:

North Dakota Republican Says He Was Outed As Gay By Democrats (source: see appendix 4)

**I can't even think straight!** - this is a play on words. 'Think straight' usually means to think clearly and rationally, but 'straight' can also mean 'heterosexual.'

If someone **swings both ways**, it means they are attracted to men and women. **AC/DC** can also refer to a bisexual.

**Swing like a pendulum** - similar to the above, though it suggests you switch more often between men and women.

Bisexuality can also be expressed in saying:

**To bat for both teams** - this idiom can come both from baseball or cricket

**"I never know when I'm going to pitch my tent"** - said more by bisexual men.

**Heteroflexible** is a new word which refers to people who are heterosexual, but with fantasies or curiosity to explore the opposite sex.

**Born that way** – while some people say that being gay is a choice, others say that it is genetic and that they are born this way.

**Sexually-fluid** - rather than being born that way, some gays and Third Wave Feminists say that our preferences can change.

# IDIOMS + EXPRESSIONS

**That's so gay** - one phrase you'll hear involves using the word gay to mean 'weak' or 'girly' or 'lame':

"That bag is so gay."

"I can't believe he kicks like that. That's so gay."

This has sparked a lot of discussion on social media as it's making the word 'gay' sound pejorative. On Twitter, one commentator wrote:

"PSA: the word 'gay' shouldn't be used to describe something stupid/unfortunate/annoying etc....pls expand your vocabulary" @emilygbohannon

Likewise, **retarded** is also often used as a synonym in this case, which some find offensive especially towards those with disabilities. On this note you may also come across **gay as** and **gay as fuck** as a way to criticise something or someone.

However, I've also found it being used on Twitter by gays themselves:

"I JUST ACCIDENTLY CAME OUT TO MY MOM AND SHE DIDN'T EVEN REACT SHE KNEW I WAS GAY AS FUCK" @twaimz





# IDIOMS + EXPRESSIONS

**"Don't ask, don't tell"** - this was a policy in the USA military whereby soldiers were not asked their sexuality, and were not expected to tell.

**What a waste!** – used pejoratively or humorously when someone finds out that a man or woman they like is not attracted to the opposite sex.

**To play for the other team** – this is an idiom which means the person is gay (or the opposite of what you'd expect of their sexuality). For example:

Shania: "John, you can't ask her out."

John: "Why not, she's hot."

Shania: "She plays for the other team."

John: "Seriously? Dayem, she's smokin'. What a waste."

**To be light in the loafers** is also used to describe someone who is gay. For example:

"Some people wonder if Marcus Bachmann, husband to Republican presidential candidate Michele.. may be a little light in the loafers." (source: see appendix 5).

## Having Sex:

**Lube up** - before anal sex, a gay person will usually put on lubricant or lube up.

**To give someone a pounding** - there are probably hundreds of idioms connected to gay sex, so here's just one. It means to have rough sex:

"Oh man, he gave me such a pounding last night."

**To go down on someone** - to give oral sex. Also used for heterosexual sex. Someone who **goes down on** a woman can be called a **muff-diver** (slang).

# SOURCES+FURTHER READING



1. Intersex: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersex>
2. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/30/airbnb-gay-couple-discrimination-\\_n\\_7183806.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/30/airbnb-gay-couple-discrimination-_n_7183806.html)
3. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/footballer-colin-kazim-richards-found-guilty-over-homophobic-gesture-to-fans-while-playing-for-9249374.html>
4. <https://sayanythingblog.com/entry/north-dakota-republican-says-he-was-outed-as-gay-by-democrats/>
5. <http://gawker.com/5821083/jon-stewart-questions-marcus-bachmanns-sexuality>

# SOURCES+FURTHER READING

**Beyond Blue** is an organisation in Australia that assists people with anxiety and depression.

**No To Homophobia:**

"Sources of personal support, guidance and legal advice for responding to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic harassment."

**Safe Schools** is a controversial new initiative in Australia designed to reduce bullying among children, and to improve understanding of LGBTQI issues.

See also: <http://getintoenglish.com/safe-schools-talking-points/>



**Contact Me**

**I hope this guide has been interesting and helpful.**

If you have any comment, question or feedback, please feel free to leave a message at the bottom of the original blog post:

<http://getintoenglish.com/vocabulary-gay-lgbt-issues/>

**Please also share this guide with your friends!**

*David Sweetnam*