

# LGBTQ+ “How-to” and “How-not to”

If you’re an LGBTQ+ ally, but worry about accidentally offending someone, these 5 tips are for you!



## #1 Mirror word choice

If talking with an LGBTQ+ person, listen to how they refer to themselves and their important relationships. If they say ‘partner’ use the word partner. If they say ‘girlfriend’, ‘boyfriend’, ‘wife’ or ‘husband’, use those words. Listen too to what pronouns they use and use them.

## #2 Introduce yourself and ask

If you’re unsure about what pronouns to use for someone, a great way to find out is to just ask them. *I use the pronouns, she/her, what about you? or My name is Cath. I use she/they. What are your pronouns?* Keep it simple and ask in the same way you’d just about someone’s name.

## #3 Never assume

When a person refers to their ‘partner’ never assume that the partner is of a different sex. If you do assume, it means that an LGBTQ+ person has to quickly decide whether it’s safe to correct you. *Are you an ally or not? Will this become a problem for me?* This can be stressful and make an LGBTQ+ person feel vulnerable. By not assuming, you keep everyone equal.

## #4 Validate ‘coming out’

When someone ‘comes out’ to you for the first time, the best responses include 3 parts:

1. Respond positively
2. Celebrate the news
3. Affirm that it will not affect your relationship negatively.

Good examples are:

*“That’s great. Congratulations. I’m here if you ever need me”*

*“I’m really proud of you. Thanks for trusting me. You know you’re always still my best friend right?”*

Do NOT say, “Really, are you sure?” or “It doesn’t matter to me who you are or who you sleep with”. Both these answers instantly devalue their news and show how little you understand. There will always be time for questions later.

## #5 Never ‘out’ someone without permission

It’s not your information to share. You do not know the details of their situation and if it’s safe for them to be out. Coming out involves a lot of emotional processing and the person needs to be left to do it in their own time. They may also choose never to come out and that is okay too.