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## Category: Additional Gay Jewelry

Subcategory: Additional Gay Jewelry

### **Tip: Designer Gay Jewelry**

With the increase of gay marriage and commitment ceremonies, gay jewelry is in more demand than ever before. Designers are recognizing this by designing first-class gay jewelry pieces, from gay and lesbian engagement rings to gay watches and necklaces. Designs also include dual engagement/wedding rings, with a female or male symbol on each ring designed so the same-sex symbols interlock, providing a strong symbol of the couple's commitment to each other. Designer pieces also include gay necklaces, with many designers offering designs used in rings in a gay necklace as an alternative to rings as symbols of commitment. Pieces use precious metals with classic design elements or stainless steel for contemporary, sophisticated designs.

### **Tip: Gay Pride Jewelry**

Most gay jewelry designers offer pieces that use the colors of the gay pride rainbow flag in their pieces. Rings, in silver or gold and in delicate designs or heavier for the thicker hand, feature gems in the six colors of the gay pride flag. Other designs make use of the gay pride triangle, using the rainbow coloring for larger pieces such as pins and pendants, or as a feature in a ring, with a triangle-cut gem inset. Also, a broader range is now available in gay earrings, with designers making use of the double-female or double-male symbols in precious metals in sophisticated designs.

## Category: Against Gay Marriage

Subcategory: Against Gay Marriage

### **Tip: Anti-Gay Marriage**

It is surprising how many people are anti-gay marriage, and what their reasons are. Some consider themselves open-minded, but think of marriage as an inherently heterosexual institution. Many do not understand why gays and lesbians want the right to be married, or how it affects their lives. People from all sections of society have spoken out against gay marriage. Groups opposed to gay rights also argue against same-sex marriage - in the 1980s the British Conservative Party was persuaded by such groups to enact a law to ban public schools from "promoting homosexuality" or endorsing same-sex marriages. Some famous people who have spoken out against gay marriage include President George W. Bush and Pope John Paul II. Arnold Schwarzenegger, in his capacity as Governor of California, vetoed a bill to allow gay marriage and said he believed that same-sex marriage should be settled by the courts

or another vote by the people via a statewide referendum.

### **Tip: Countries Against Gay Marriage**

Homosexuality is still illegal in many countries around the world, including Afghanistan, India, Iran, and many countries in Africa. Homosexuality was illegal in the Soviet Union, but several countries formerly part of the Soviet Union have legalized same-sex civil unions or gay marriage. No European country has laws against homosexuality, but not all countries have laws preventing discrimination against gay and lesbian people. Australia passed the Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill in 2004, amending the Marriage Act of 1961 so that it specifically stated marriage was for one man and one woman only. A similar law was proposed by the Republican party in the US in 2006, but it wasn't passed. The religious and moral beliefs of a country tend to inform that country's stand on gay marriage. Although many religions allow gay members, very few will conduct gay marriage ceremonies. Anti-discrimination laws further complicate the matter, as a government's failure to allow gay marriage is not considered discrimination in most courts.

## Category: For Gay Marriage

Subcategory: For Gay Marriage

### **Tip: Countries That May Soon Support Gay Marriage**

In 2003, the Chinese Parliament proposed a law allowing gay marriage, but the proposal failed to get the support it needed. Taiwan, in the same year, proposed legislation granting same-sex marriages but the bill faced opposition in cabinet and is currently stalled in the legislative system. Estonia is currently discussing the possibility of legalizing gay marriage. One same-sex marriage ceremony was conducted in France in 2004, but has since been declared void. New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark has expressed support for the idea of gay marriage, but has yet to introduce legislation to legalize it. As New Zealand has a history of liberal legislation, having been the first country in the world to give women the right to vote, same-sex marriage laws may soon be in place there. In 2004 King-Father Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia wrote that he was impressed by the gay marriages conducted in San Francisco and that he would support gay marriage if it was raised by his people.

### **Tip: How to Show Support for Gay Marriage**

Registering support with a support group is a good beginning if you are interested in supporting gay marriage. There are many gay activist groups spread across the world working toward legalizing gay marriage, but a good place to start is your local civil liberties union. A way to show support every day is to wear a piece of pride jewelry or a

pride pin. There is a rapidly growing movement among heterosexuals to boycott marriage as a protest against the ban on gay marriage. In Oregon, when Multnomah and Benton counties fought the state to be allowed to perform same-sex marriages, Benton county officers refused to perform ceremonies of any kind until a decision was reached by the court.

## Category: Gay & Lesbian Entertainment

Subcategory: Gay & Lesbian Entertainment

### **Tip: Queer as Folk for You**

Show your love of the smash hit show "Queer as Folk" by wearing it! How? LoveandPride.com has the exclusive line of "Queer as Folk" accessories available for purchase right from their website. Choose from titanium or stainless steel pendants and bracelets, each with different insignias. Some pieces bear the male symbol, while others have even less subtle symbols, like the whimsical swimming sperm stainless steel ring for men. You can even decorate your piercing with the stainless steel barbell that features a tiny flag with the letter "q" emblazoned on it. Very sexy ... and a great conversation piece.

### **Tip: Queer TV**

One of the first gay-oriented cable channels ever launched was Q Television Network. The channel offered programming ranging from films to music and talk shows geared toward issues in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender world. Owned by Triangle Multimedia, the channel found its biggest hit from 2005-2006 with "The Queen Edge with Jack E. Jett." This humorous variety show hosted celebrities (a permanent fixture was comedian Sandra Bernhard), musical acts, and comedy. Although the network shut down due to financial difficulties in early 2006, QTN still stands out as a milestone for gay television programming.

### **Tip: Rocking Out**

Being openly gay or bisexual has long been considered a dark and destructive thing for a rising star in the music industry. However, more and more artists and producers have come forward...and their success has skyrocketed. Here's a (brief!) list of just a few who have rocked "out" over the past few decades: David Bowie, Ani DiFranco, Melissa Etheridge, David Geffen, Boy George, Elton John, Janet Joplin, d. lang, Little Richard, George Michael, Lou Reed, Jimmy Somerville, Michael Stipe

## Category: Gay & Lesbian Health

Subcategory: Gay & Lesbian Health

**Tip: Lesbian Health Topic: Breast & Gynecological Cancers**

Just like any other woman, a lesbian must take care of her breast and gynecological health. However, many lesbians over 40 years of age do not get regular mammograms, have clinical examinations, or even perform self-examinations on their breasts. This fact increases risk of cancers and other health problems among lesbians. A simple way to reduce the risk of breast and gynecological cancers is through routine check-ups with your OB-GYN or gynecologist. See him/her once a year for pap smears, mammograms (if you're over 40; get clinical breast exams under 40), and screenings for STDs. Many infections can be treated if discovered in an early stage.

## Category: Gay & Lesbian Jewelry

Subcategory: Gay & Lesbian Jewelry

**Tip: Lesbian Accessories: Jewelry**

Just because you're a lesbian, it doesn't mean you can't wear some bling (besides the chain holding your wallet to your jeans). Lesbian jewelry is a recent and popular trend, from rings to pendants and more. But this jewelry is not your mother's jewelry. No rhinestone kitty cats or poppies. Lesbians today can accessorize with chunky necklaces that show off bare collarbones. Rings that proudly sport the female insignia or even a gay pride rainbow. Fans of the show "The L Word" can get especially excited, since there is now an entire collection of jewelry -- some of which was even featured on the show. Check out the new collection at [LoveandPride.com](http://LoveandPride.com).

**Tip: Say it Loud**

Want to make a really bold statement about your lesbian lifestyle...with class? Pick up a lesbian necklace like the "L" stainless steel tag on a 17-inch chain from Love and Pride. The necklace is a simple yet evocative statement of whatever it is that "L" means to you and/or your partner. The pink enamel letter stands out beautifully on its tag leaving the door open for conversation, or it can be left a little ajar for intrigue! This pendant, available exclusively from the [LoveandPride.com](http://LoveandPride.com) website, is featured as part of the popular "L" Word Collection, inspired by Showtime's hit lesbian drama by the same name.

## Category: Gay & Lesbian Wedding Bands

## Subcategory: Gay & Lesbian Wedding Bands

### **Tip: Gay Wedding Bands**

You've found that special person, made a commitment to share your lives together, and now it's time to find that special ring that makes the statement. You could search for traditional wedding bands, but these days there are more options. Gay wedding bands are readily available for same-sex couples who want to express their love and celebrate their union in a unique way. The best part is that you won't sacrifice quality or style by selecting from the wide range of bands available for gay couples. Rings made with yellow, white, or even rose gold are a wonderful choice. Or choose a traditional metal like platinum, or a newer one such as titanium. What sets these rings apart are the designs, which feature male and/or female symbols, gay pride rainbow detailing, or engravings that honor your same-sex union.

### **Tip: Traditional Beauty**

If you and your partner are more interested in traditional-looking lesbian wedding rings, you may wish to consider a simple 18-karat gold band with a female insignia laid on top of it. The inside of the insignia features a delicate diamond, which lends the ring a classic look. You'll still get the effect of gay pride while remaining faithful to a more simplistic and eternal style. Visit [LoveandPride.com](http://LoveandPride.com) to view and purchase this ring -- or to find other traditional pieces just like it. There's never been a better time to celebrate your union with a fine wedding band!

## Category: Gay Adoption

### Subcategory: Gay Adoption

### **Tip: Adoption Home Studies**

It's no secret that gay couples have been adopting children for years. However, now that legislation has passed laws allowing legal adoption by same-sex parents in many states, the need for "secret adoptions" is over. In fact, when it comes to the standard adoption home study, it's best to be as open as possible. Adoption home studies are an evaluation of your home life and living space. These are done to be sure your future adopted child will have a safe, secure, and happy life with you and your partner. Topics ranging from your financial status to the way you've set up your child's room will be reviewed. Regardless of any stigmas against gay adoption that you may still feel are active in our society, be as honest as you can. This will only improve your chances of being approved.

### **Tip: Considering Gay Adoption**

While raising a child related to you by blood is a satisfying endeavour, the same sort of love and pride can come from gay adoption. Gay and lesbian couples are in a unique place in culture where the adoption of a child is a regular practice, meaning the adopted children, growing up, will have a solid support system. The most important reason to adopt is to provide a loving environment for a child to grow up in. Many children around the world have been orphaned or abandoned and need parents. Before considering adoption, couples should be sure they understand the commitment needed to raise an adopted child. Adoption requires not only emotional but significant financial commitment. Couples considering adoption should also carefully examine the gay adoption laws in their area. As the number of infertile couples wishing to adopt children grows, various illegal practices have emerged that potential parents may not be aware of.

### **Tip: Countries That Allow Same-Sex Adoption**

Countries that allow same-sex adoption include England and Wales, the Netherlands, Iceland, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, South Africa, and Andorra. Germany, Israel, Denmark and Norway allow partners in civil unions to adopt the natural or sometimes adopted child of the other partner. France has a law that both same-sex parents have parental rights over the biological child of one partner, reducing the significance of biological parenthood in a sperm donation situation. In America, California, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Massachusetts, Washington state, Washington, D.C., Wisconsin, Vermont and New Mexico allow gay couples to adopt. Likewise, in Canada, adoption laws vary from state to state, but most states have gay adoption rights in some form. The ACT, Tasmania and Western Australia allow same-sex couple adoption in Australia. Legislation in New Zealand may soon be introduced to allow gay couples to adopt.

### **Tip: Gay Adoption: Where to Start**

Adoption for any couple -- same-sex or otherwise -- can be a daunting task to undertake. As a gay couple, you may not even be aware of how to begin. Here's the first step all gay couples should take once they've decided to adopt a child: Do your research. Begin with a simple online search, using the phrase gay adoption, gay adoption + legal rights, or gay adoption laws, putting the words "gay adoption" in quotes for a more accurate return on listings. You can also contact local gay and lesbian community groups for assistance on how to begin your search for a child in need of adoption.

### **Tip: Hire A Lawyer**

In order for gay couples to best present their case for adoption, they should hire a lawyer with experience in this area. Look for lawyers who have worked on same-sex couple adoptions, as they will be better able to develop a convincing presentation on

your behalf. You can search the Internet for ""gay cases + lawyers" or visit the American Bar Association online. In addition, take a look at the National Association of Social Workers and/or the North American Council on Adoptable Children for information on gay adoption as well as lawyers trained in presenting strong cases for same-sex couples.

### **Tip: What Happens to Children if Your Relationship Ends**

It is important to consider parental rights when adopting a child in case your relationship breaks up. If your relationship ends and you have no legal rights to the child, your partner is under no obligation to grant you access. In cases where one parent is the biological parent, it is important for the other partner to either formally adopt the child or otherwise establish legal parental rights. If the child has been adopted by only one partner, some countries allow step-parent rights for the other gay partner, however, this does not apply to all countries. Be sure to carefully investigate all laws regarding gay and lesbian adoption in your area.

## Category: Gay Divorce

Subcategory: Gay Divorce

### **Tip: Grounds for Gay Divorce**

Generally speaking, there are two established grounds for the dissolution of gay marriages (also called "civil unions"): 1. The marriage can be determined as "irretrievably broken." 2. One of the members of the couple is determined to be "mentally incompetent." Keep in mind that your local laws may have slight variations on these two grounds. Your attorney will be able to guide you toward the proper direction for the grounds of your divorce at your first meeting with him/her, based on your explanation of the reasons you and your partner are separating.

## Category: Gay Marriage Debate

Subcategory: Gay Marriage Debate

### **Tip: Big Events in Gay Marriage**

Many protests have been made around the world over the absence of gay marriage rights. Some of these have taken the form of local governments approving gay marriages to test the existing marriage laws of their country. Here are some of the big events: In France in 2004, Noel Mamere, the mayor of Begles conducted a same-sex wedding ceremony. The marriage was later voided and the mayor faced death

threats. In the US, there was a test of San Francisco gay marriage law. In 2005, marriage licences were issued to 4,037 same-sex couples. In all, 3,995 gay marriages were performed before the Supreme Court issued a stay of proceedings and voided the marriages. The rebellion showed the overwhelming support in the gay community for marriage. In Oregon, when Multnomah and Benton counties fought the state to be allowed to perform same-sex marriages, Benton county officers refused to perform ceremonies of any kind until a decision was reached by the court. Benton county officers received threats and reprimands during the period gay marriage licences were issued. In many other cases around the world, gay couples have been married in a country allowing gay marriage and fought to have their marriage recognized in their home country. While these attempts have often failed, the successful attempt creates a precedent that allows all gay couples to access the same avenue to marriage.

### **Tip: Civil Unions vs. Gay Marriage**

When a large amount of heterosexual couples began to establish committed, co-habiting relationships without marriage, governments recognized the need for de facto, or 'common-law', spousal rights by passing laws providing property, custody and dependent rights to de facto partners. Similar arrangements have been made in various areas as a way of legally recognizing the committed relationships of gay couples, in a mix between de facto partnerships and marriage called a civil union. There have been arguments in the gay marriage debate about gay civil unions from both supporters of gay marriage and anti-gay marriage groups. Supporters of gay marriage argue that civil unions cannot replace the right to marry and are a way of segregating gay couples. This argument is based on the fact that heterosexual couples can access two legal avenues to register their commitment: marriage, which requires a ceremony and a signed legal document, or de facto partnership, which requires no contract at the time and only basic proof at dissolution if there are any property disputes. Gay couples can only access civil unions, a separate entity.

## **Category: Gay Marriage Facts & Statistics**

Subcategory: Gay Marriage Facts & Statistics

### **Tip: San Francisco Gay Weddings**

In 2004, for one month the city of San Francisco issued marriage licenses to over 4,000 same-sex couples. Couples travelled from other parts of the US and from other countries to be married. Almost 4000 gay weddings were held before the Supreme Court of California issued a stay preventing any further marriages until a court hearing was held. One of the more significant gay weddings held was that of David J. Knight, whose father William Knight was author of the proposal to prevent California from recognizing gay marriages from other states. David married his partner of 10 years. In

the same month, 103 opposite sex marriage licenses were issued. San Francisco intended for the issue to be heard in the lower courts before getting to a Supreme Court level, so that a jury of a wide range of people could hear the city's arguments for gay marriage. The Supreme Court intervened early on in the case, and the issue was decided by the judges on the bench. San Francisco did not succeed in its attempts, but gay marriage laws were tested by the gay wedding idea. The 3,995 gay weddings held in one month showed how much the citizens of San Francisco supported gay marriage rights.

**Tip: The San Francisco Gay Marriage Month**

In 2004, for one short month, the city of San Francisco approved almost 4000 gay marriages. The city defied state laws in issuing marriage licences to same-sex couples, only 80 of which were not filled within the month. In the same time period, only just over 100 opposite-sex marriages were performed in the city's jurisdiction.

## Category: Gay Marriage Gifts

Subcategory: Gay Marriage Gifts

**Tip: Showing Support for the L Word**

Weddings are a time to cement not only romantic relationships but also family and friendships &ndash; and lesbian weddings are an ideal time to demonstrate pride friends and family feel when lesbian couples put 'the L word' in legal terms. While traditional wedding gifts are always appropriate, you can give a gift that recognizes the uniqueness of a lesbian marriage. Such gifts include lesbian artwork or books on the lesbian body. A framed photo or album of photos recording your friendship will help remind your friends that your friendship is solid, even after they take their relationship to a new level.

## Category: Gay Marriage in Canada

Subcategory: Gay Marriage in Canada

**Tip: Ask, Tell, Celebrate!**

The "don't ask, don't tell" policy concerning homosexuals in the United States military is definitely not a policy the Canadian military has had to deal with. In fact, for roughly the last five years, same-sex unions have been blessed by military chaplains. In addition, ceremonies have even been performed on actual military bases. In June of 2005, the Canadian military announced its first same-sex marriage, which was presided over a

month prior by a minister of the United Church in Nova Scotia's CFB at Greenwood.

**Tip: Canadian Provinces and Legal Gay Marriage**

Canadian law has established the legalization of same-sex marriages nationwide. However, some provinces and territories came to it at different times. Here is the chronological time line for nine provinces and/or territories, prior to the national legalization of gay marriage: Ontario: 10 June 2003 British Columbia: 8 July 2003 Quebec: 19 March 2004 Yukon Territory: 14 July 2004 Manitoba: 16 September 2004 Nova Scotia: 24 September 2004 Saskatchewan: 5 November 2004 Newfoundland and Labrador: 21 December 2004 New Brunswick: 23 June 2005

**Tip: How Many Gay Marriages in Canada?**

Since gay marriage was made legal by the Civil Marriage Act in 2005, thousands of gay and lesbian couples in Canada flocked to the altar from June 2003 to October 2006. Who has the highest rate of same-sex marriages in the nation? Ontario tops the list, with 6,524. This is followed by British Columbia, with 3,927 marriages taking place. Quebec had 947, while Alberta had 409. The lowest number of same-sex marriages during that time period were held by Prince Edward Island (8), Northwest Territories (2), and Nunavut (1).

**Tip: Immigration and Canadian Gay Marriage**

Once the Civil Marriage Act had been enacted, the CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) made a temporary immigration policy that did not recognize same-sex unions that took place outside of Canada &ndash; regardless of whether or not the marriage took place in a another country that also recognized legal same-sex unions. However, in late 2006, Bill Siksay the New Democratic Party MP called on the CIC to "recognize legal marriages of gay and lesbian couples performed in jurisdictions outside Canada for purposes of immigration in exactly the same way as the legal marriages of heterosexual couples are recognized." One month later, this request was granted.

## Category: Gay Marriage in the US

Subcategory: Gay Marriage in the US

**Tip: States That Recognize Same-sex Unions**

So which are the states in the U.S. that recognize same-sex marriages? Since 2004, Massachusetts has recognized same-sex marriage. In addition, California, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Vermont recognize legal unions. They are not called marriages, although these unions do afford partners all the rights and responsibilities of

marriage under their individual state laws. The District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, Oregon, and Washington have also created legal unions for same-sex couples. These offer different subsets of the rights and responsibilities afforded to married couples under their state laws.

## Category: Gay Marriage in US

Subcategory: Gay Marriage in US

### **Tip: Attempts to Ban Gay Marriage America-Wide**

Gay marriage became a major issue in the 2004 presidential election. Both George W. Bush and his opponent John F. Kerry used gay marriage issues as part of their election campaigns, with Bush supporting a ban on same-sex marriage on a federal level through a piece of legislation called the Federal Marriage Amendment. This amendment would have voided marriages recognized in Massachusetts. On May 18, 2006, the Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to support the gay marriage amendment. It was debated in the United States Senate and ultimately defeated.

## Category: Gay Marriage Laws

Subcategory: Gay Marriage Laws

### **Tip: Gay Marriage Legal Benefits**

Gay marriage does not entitle couples to the same benefits as heterosexual marriage in most countries. Part of the reasoning behind the struggle for gay marriage to be legalized is to ensure gay couples have gay marriage rights, such as inheritance rights, property rights and next-of-kin rights in the event one partner becomes ill. In Canada, as well as gaining rights through marriage, cohabiting same-sex couples are entitled to many of the same legal and financial benefits as married opposite-sex couples. In the Netherlands and Belgium, gay marriage and opposite-sex marriage is equal apart from rights to children. Only biological or formally adoptive parents have parental rights, meaning that the non-biological parent of the child must formally adopt their spouse's child, even if the child was born during the marriage.

### **Tip: History of Gay Marriage Laws in America**

The fight for legalizing gay marriage in America has mostly been conducted through the courts. Here is a quick history of the US laws from various states: Connecticut was the fifth US state to allow civil unions, and the first to do it without judicial intervention.

. Maryland has an appeal in process to allow gay marriage due to begin hearing December 2006. New York doesn't have gay marriage laws, but five separate suits have been filed seeking same-sex marriage. Four of these failed and one succeeded at the trial level. That case was stayed and later reversed. In Oregon in 2004 and 2005, two counties began to issue marriage licences to same-sex couples. The state Supreme Court ruled that the counties had acted against the state's constitution and voided the marriages. The Oregon Supreme Court ruled that the marriages were invalid as the county had acted against the state's constitution. Oregonians voted 57% to 43% to pass a constitutional amendment defining marriage to be between one man and one woman. However, law allowing same-sex civil unions was introduced. Washington state currently bans marriage with the Defence of Marriage Act 1998, but the legislation is open to a challenge to allow same-sex marriage in law.

### **Tip: Laws in Spain**

Spain approved gay marriage in 2004. Requirements for same sex marriage in Spain are roughly the same as for opposite-sex marriage: If you have been divorced or are widowed, you need to show proof, such as a death certificate, or divorce decree. They must have the Apostille (official seal) of the Hague and be translated into Spanish. Couples applying for a gay marriage license need to show their original birth certificates and passports as well as a Consular Certificate of No Impediment to Marriage from their home country's consul in Spain. This is a sworn statement that certifies both partners are free to marry. Other documents required are an application to marry, a Consular Registration Certificate, a Certificate of Residence, a Certificate of Consular Inscription. In some areas the traditional posting of bans must also be observed, which is usually a period of some weeks to allow protests against the marriage to be filed. Spain has a waiting period of 21 days once the marriage license has been approved.

## Category: Gay Marriage Resources

Subcategory: Gay Marriage Resources

### **Tip: Booking for Gay Weddings**

When it comes to weddings, the biggest question is but 'how far ahead should I book'? The issue of timing all depends on how popular you think the venue/DJ/celebrant is going to be at the time of your wedding. If you are in an area that has a large number of gay weddings, or has just legalized gay marriage, it is a good idea to book everything you need at least six months ahead. An idea of how popular gay marriage is can be found by looking out for any article on gay marriage you can find or visiting marriage sites in your state. Bear in mind that the more unique or alternative the option, the more likely it is that you will be able to book it when you need it. However, unique also means that no-one else provides the same service, so it is even more important to book these

services.

### **Tip: Support Resources for Gay Marriage**

There are many resources for supporters of gay marriage, but it is more difficult to find people to help when you are planning a gay wedding. The best place to look for resources when planning a gay wedding is on the Internet, in gay magazines, and through word-of-mouth. In America, the Gay and Lesbian Task Force has developed a resource for people considering gay marriage. Have a look at their website for wedding ideas. There are a lot of companies that specialize in gay weddings. When consulting these companies, it is good to bear in mind that they have their own agenda and will encourage you to buy their services. However, they do provide a wider range of options for gay wedding invitations, venues, rings and other items than mainstream companies. Keep an eye out for any articles on gay marriage, and save it, to compile your own resource on gay marriage.

## Category: Gay Marriages in Canada

Subcategory: Gay Marriages in Canada

### **Tip: Churches Willing to Perform Gay Marriages in Canada**

There are many churches in Canada that will perform gay marriages, including the Unitarian Church of Canada, the United Church and MCC. Although same-sex marriage is not supported in orthodox religious tradition in Judaism, Reform Judaism allows Rabbis to bless same-sex unions in a synagogue. The text does not use the words 'wedding' or 'marriage' in the vows. For a non-religious ceremony, it is important to know that Canadian law prohibits marriage commissioners from including references to religion in the ceremony. The Anglican Diocese of New Westminster, which is located in British Columbia, began to allow its churches to bless same-sex unions. Although this was good news for Canada gay marriage, it resulted in bishops from Africa, Asia and Latin America cutting off relations with the diocese.

### **Tip: Who Can Marry in Canada**

Canada does not have a residency requirement for gay marriage. This means that any couple from any country can travel to Canada to be married, regardless of what the laws are in their home country or the time they intend to spend in Canada. Couples can only be married in Canada if both partners are over 18 (or, in British Columbia, 17), and can produce photo ID.

## Category: Gay Rights Resources & Organizations

## Subcategory: Gay Rights Resources & Organizations

### **Tip: Gay and Lesbian Medical Association**

Besides GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis), there is another medical organization that deals with the health and education of the LGBT community and the public at large. The Gay and Lesbian medical Association (GLMA) was originally open only to physicians, residents, and students, but as of 2002 has expanded to include tens of thousands of LGBT health professionals and LGBT patients. In their membership, there are around 1,000 health professionals who reside and work in most US states and several countries. Their health care disciplines include “internal medicine, family practice, psychiatry, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, emergency medicine, neurology and infectious diseases.” For more, go to [www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org).

### **Tip: GMHC**

One of the largest organizations dedicated to improving the health of gays and lesbians worldwide is the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). GMHC is a not-for-profit, volunteer-supported, community-based organization that is committed to fighting AIDS as well as educating all members of the public about HIV. According to their website, [www.gmhc.org](http://www.gmhc.org), their mission is to: reduce the spread of HIV disease, help people with HIV maintain and improve their health and independence, and keep the prevention, treatment and cure of HIV an urgent national and local priority.

### **Tip: Lambda Legal**

One of the best resources gays and lesbians can find is good legal representation. The national organization Lambda Legal works to help lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those who are HIV positive receive full protection of rights through litigation, public policy work, and education. Their national headquarters are in New York, and there are also regional offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, and Los Angeles. In addition, a corp of volunteer Cooperating Attorneys allows others in the legal field get involved in Lambda Legal's fight against sexual discrimination and bias based on sexual orientation. For more information, visit [www.LambdaLegal.org](http://www.LambdaLegal.org).

### **Tip: The Matthew Shepard Foundation**

When their 21 year old son Matthew was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime in 1998, Dennis and Judy Shepard founded an education program in his honor. According to their mission statement, the foundation is designed to “Replace hate with understanding, compassion, and acceptance.” Part of their goal is to promote national education and outreach programs by retelling the Matthew Shepard story. They hope it will act as a reminder to stop the violence against gays and lesbians everywhere.

## Category: Gay Wedding Ceremonies

Subcategory: Gay Wedding Ceremonies

### **Tip: Advice on Writing Stellar Same Sex Wedding Vows**

It's a beautiful day for you and your same-sex partner, as you will finally join together in wedded bliss. Whether you're with another woman or a man, you still need to write vows that will link you and your partner together through better or worse. You may find that you want to tailor these vows a little differently than most heterosexual couples' expressions would be. Regardless of your approach, you should follow these five suggestions for vow writing. Prepare ahead of time &ndash; Just like with any speech that you would give, you will want to have plenty of time to sit down and create the perfect vows. Planning a wedding can be very stressful, but you do need to take the time to think about your vows throughout the process. Write from the heart &ndash; Just like any couple, you two are in love. When you finally sit down to write your vows, let your heart do the talking and your hand the writing. Speak honestly about what you love about your partner and how excited you feel to spend your life with him or her. Don't be afraid to get help &ndash; If you get stuck at any point while writing, ask for help. Maybe you have a writer friend who can get you out of a jam. Perhaps you can speak to your partner's friends, siblings, or parents to get ideas and inspiration. Memorize the vows a little &ndash; You don't have to have every word memorized verbatim, but you should have the bulk of the sentiments down pat. This way when you recite your vows, you can focus on your partner and look into their eyes. Enjoy the process &ndash; Lastly, you should enjoy writing your vows. You should be overflowing with good to say about your partner, and vice-versa. It should be a joy to pull together all of what you love about him or her into a small speech.

### **Tip: How to Choose the Best Person to Officiate a Gay Marriage Ceremony**

Marriage is a wonderful thing. The ceremony is beautiful and meaningful for the couple. There are so many different types of ceremonies it is hard to determine where to start. Choosing the officiate who will preside over the ceremony is something every couple must think about. Getting someone to perform a gay marriage doesn't have to be difficult. To find the right officiate for a gay wedding ceremony, one only has to look at the faith of the couple before venturing forth. Jewish couples might have to do a large search, but in the end there is a Rabbi who will perform the ceremony and be proud to do so. The ceremony will not necessarily be orthodox, but it will be a ceremony to remember for the couple. For those couples who practice an alternative faith, such as Pagan, there are priests, priestesses and celebrant who can perform a handfasting without much fuss. Baptist couples can have a regular ceremony just like any other

couple. There is doctrine now available for same-sex couples to be married in the Baptists church. As members of the Anglican church same-sex couples can have no fear walking the aisle. It's easy to do a search for the right church to have a marriage ceremony in. Being Agnostic or Atheist doesn't come with complications on where to have the ceremony or who should preside. A justice of the peace can help those couples be fully entranced in wedded bliss in no time. Always make sure of the legal ramifications of the state before proceeding with the ceremony.

## Category: Planning a Same-Sex Wedding

### Subcategory: Planning a Same-Sex Wedding

#### **Tip: Suiting Up**

Dress? Gown? Suit? What you wear at your wedding is one of the more important decisions you and your partner will make. As is the case with every other aspect of your plans for your big day, sync up with your partner about your attire. You may not wish to wear the same outfits (although some couples certainly do), but there should be some kind of uniting theme between them -- even if it's a matching corsage or boutonniere. While some lesbian couples for example may choose to have a traditional gown and tux pairing, this is by no means expected. Have fun with your wedding day attire, and above all, make sure you're comfortable!

#### **Tip: The First Step**

Get engaged! Propose to your same-sex partner with real flair by taking him or her to a spot that means something to you both. If you're a private couple, choose the place where you met or had your first date. Better yet, whisk him/her away to a gay-friendly bed and breakfast for the weekend and propose during brunch or while enjoying the sunset. If you're more outgoing as a couple, pop the question at a gathering of friends and/or community members. Truly active couples may even wish to make a proposal right after a gay community meeting or event. However you choose to get engaged, make it a story worth telling ... and retelling.

#### **Tip: What to Say**

Wedding vows are an often-overlooked but vital part of your same-sex ceremony. Decide in advance if you'd like your officiant to suggest sentiments for you both to share or if you'd feel better reading something personal. Perhaps you feel comfortable "winging it" and speaking from the heart when the moment of vow exchange comes. However you choose to approach it, don't neglect to discuss it with your partner as part of your wedding planning. The moment that you share your thoughts with each other in front of your family and friends is a moment that all will remember.

## Category: The Gay Marriage Debate

Subcategory: The Gay Marriage Debate

### **Tip: The Gay Marriage Debate: Social Argument**

Whether we wish to accept it or not, in this country, marriage is often treated like a glorified business transaction. For this reason, gay marriage has received a critical eye. How productive can a gay couple be in society if they cannot produce offspring (and thereby contribute to society as a whole)? This argument has been undercut with counter arguments that by that logic, menopausal women or sterile men should not be allowed to marry. However, some still maintain that the social construct of marriage should remain male-female in order to preserve cultural traditions. Today, active steps are being made by policymakers and the public to reverse this thinking.

### **Tip: The Gay Marriage Debate: Tradition**

Although the thought of legalizing gay marriage raises controversy due to its obvious refutation of tradition, it should be noted that several other "traditions" in society have also been overturned over the years. Here are just a few: Divorce (now legal and accepted) Acceptance of interracial marriage Allowance of contraception within marriage Women are no longer considered property of their husbands Polygamy has been outlawed