



## OutHere: An LGBTQIA+ Screenwriting Contest Submission Guide

**This brand-new screenwriting competition aims to bring LGBTQ+ characters and stories, front and centre. So we are looking for scripts with LGBTQ+ protagonists, antagonists, secondary/side, and peripheral characters.**

Whilst queer representation is improving, according to the GLAAD TV report for 2022-2023, there was actually a decrease of 1.3% in LGBTQ+ characters, on scripted primetime American broadcast series, from the previous year.

The more screenwriters who include LGBTQ+ characters as standard, the more chance we've got of them getting better, and there being more LGBTQ+ representation on the big and small screen. Some may say it is unrealistic to have queer characters in every TV show and film, yet never stop to think about the reality of superheroes, zombies, and aliens.

This competition is about championing queer characters and stories, particularly those that celebrate joy, community, and family. Queer audiences, as well as our cishet allies, want to see LGBTQ+ characters whose queerness isn't a plot point, they're just queer because that's who they are.

Whether you're queer and write LGBTQ+ characters constantly, or you're cishet and including LGBTQ+ characters for the first time, here are 6 tips to help you write great LGBTQ+ characters.



## **1. Let's not 'Bury Your Gays'.**

This is the number one most hated LGBTQ+ trope within the queer community.

It's when the LGBTQ+ character (not limited to just gay men anymore), often the only one in the story, is killed off. Usually in a horrific way to further the plot of cishet characters. Or simply just for the drama. This trope reinforces the idea that queer characters are more expendable than cishet ones. It dates back to the Hays Code and publishing rules from the early 1900s, where gay characters couldn't be portrayed positively, or else they wouldn't be published or commissioned.

Characters would either have a miserable life, or they could have a happy life, but the story would HAVE to end with their death as some sort of morality tale. Even after laws and rules changed, this continued and became the norm.


This is why there are lots of stories that portray queer life as being sad, lonely, dangerous and even deadly. This trope continues to this day, though it's mostly queer female characters getting killed off which is known as 'Dead Lesbian Syndrome'.

You can avoid this by getting to know your queer characters, get into their heads, make them authentic, nuanced and alive. They should have their own wants, needs, dreams, and plots.

## **2. Don't let them be the Queer one and only.**

I'm sure you've seen this before. A lonely queer character in a sea of cishets, usually the gay best friend, or the random queer work colleague.

These stories often do not give the queer character any arc or growth. They exist to be fabulously queer to further the cishet character's story. It's very tokenistic.



They have zero community and are hardly ever in relationships, so come across as sad and lonely and able to drop everything whenever the cishet protagonist needs them. It's more box-ticking than actual representation.

Whilst some queer people don't have much community (it may not be safe for them to be out, or they may live in a place with little to no LGBTQ+ community) most queer people surround themselves with other queer people. We flock together like birds of a fabulous feather! So give your queer protagonist queer friends, family, and a sense of community.

### **3. Avoid creating characters that are ambiguous/not-too Queer**


This is when a character is maybe queer but nothing is ever said to clarify. The characters will never label themselves, nor actually do anything that makes their identity more explicit, although sometimes they will flirt with the same/multiple genders, but it's often done in such a way that it could just be for a cheap laugh. This trope is when we get a queer character, but unlike the cishet characters, they don't get to express affection for their partners, they don't get to be too gender-bending, or too gay, or too butch/femme, etc. In other words, they don't get to do anything that makes the queer community so amazing.

### **4. Say the Word!**

Don't be afraid to describe your characters, or have them describe themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, aromantic, agender, pansexual, 2 spirit, etc. They are not dirty words. It's not always easy to 'show' instead of 'tell', especially if romance/sex isn't a part of the story. Also, if your character is a bi-man married to a woman, that might be tricky to show unless flashbacks were used.

### **5. Know your dates!**

When writing stories with LGBTQ+ characters, be aware of what the date is, or at least the month, as your characters may be celebrating. I.e June is Pride Month, and May 17th is the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia,



and Transphobia. If your story is set in a specific town, look up when they have their pride celebrations, as that may also factor into your story. Having your LGBTQ+ characters getting ready for Pride could add some lovely texture to a scene.

## **6. Queer Joy!**

LGBTQ+ characters can exist without needing to come out, get kicked out, or transition. They don't need to constantly face homophobia (biphobia, transphobia, acephobia, etc), self-hatred, or unhappiness because they are queer. They can just exist, already out, already their authentic self. So let's see the joy, fun, happiness, and love within the queer community. That's not to say we don't want conflict, but cishet characters manage to have plenty of conflict that isn't about them being cishet, so let's see queer characters have conflict unrelated to their queerness too.

**We hope these tips help you write brilliant  
LGBTQ+ characters and stories - we can't wait to  
see what you've written! To enter the contest go to**

**[https://www.shorescripts.com/outhere-  
screenplay-contest/](https://www.shorescripts.com/outhere-screenplay-contest/)**