

Watch Your Language

If you're unsure of the proper term or language to use to describe someone's disability, just ask the person!

GENERAL GUIDELINES

OUTDATED OR OFFENSIVE:	REASON(S):	CURRENTLY ACCEPTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The blind The disabled The autistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All currently accepted terms should be used with "people first" language - i.e., "people with...", "person with...", the exception to this are "deaf people" and "deaf community," which are fine; Groups people into one undifferentiated category; Condescending; Does not reflect the individuality, equality, or dignity of people with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People with disabilities People who are blind People who are visually impaired People with low vision People with autism Deaf people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handicapped Cripple The disabled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connotes that people with disabilities need charity; Disabilities do not handicap: attitudes and inaccessibility handicap. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People with disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able-bodied Normal people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When speaking about people without disabilities as compared to people with disabilities; Implies that the person with a disability isn't normal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-disabled Person without a disability

SPECIFIC DISABILITIES & CONDITIONS

OUTDATED OR OFFENSIVE:	REASON(S):	CURRENTLY ACCEPTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaf and dumb Deaf-mute Hearing Impaired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implies mental incapacitation; Simply because someone is deaf does not mean that they cannot speak; Negative connotation of "impaired." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaf or hard of hearing Non-verbal Person who does not speak Has a speech or communication disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confined to a wheelchair Wheelchair-bound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheelchairs don't confine; they give people mobility! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a wheelchair Person who uses a wheelchair Person who has a mobility disability

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connotes repulsiveness, oddness; • Dehumanizing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple disabilities • Severe disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insane • Maniac • Psycho 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigmatizing; • Considered offensive; • Reinforces negative stereotypes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral disability • Emotional disability • Person who has a mental illness • Person who has a psychiatric disability • He has bipolar disorder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentally Retarded • Retard • Mentally defective • Slow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigmatizing; • Implies that a person cannot learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive disability • Intellectual disability • Developmental disability • Learning disability
<p>Stricken, Afflicted, Suffers from, or Victim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stroke victim • Stricken by MS • She suffers from epilepsy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative connotation; • Emotionally charged language adds the unnecessary element of pity to the person's disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who had a stroke • Person who has multiple sclerosis • Person who has epilepsy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth defect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implies there was something wrong with the birth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congenital disability • Born with their disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deinstitutionalized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigmatizing; • Groups people into one category; not focused on the individual. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who used to live in an institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated term; • Considered offensive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person of short stature

Adapted by the Institute for Community Inclusion