

Use People First Language... (DO'S)	...Instead of Labels that Stereotype and Devalue (DON'TS)
people/individuals with disabilities an adult who has a disability a child with a disability a person	the handicapped the disabled
people/individuals without disabilities typical kids a person	normal people atypical kids healthy individual
people with intellectual and developmental disabilities he/she has a cognitive impairment a person who has Down syndrome	the mentally retarded; retarded people he/she is retarded; the retarded he/she's a Downs kid
a person who has autism	autistic
people with a mental illness a person who has an emotional disability a person with a psychiatric illness/disability	the mentally ill; the emotionally disturbed he/she is insane; crazy; demented; psycho; a maniac; a lunatic
a person who has a learning disability	he/she is learning disabled
a person who is deaf he/she has a hearing impairment/loss a man/woman who is hard of hearing	the deaf
a person who is deaf and cannot speak a person who has a speech disorder he/she uses a communication device he/she uses synthetic speech	he/she is deaf and dumb a mute
a person who is blind a person who has a visual impairment a man/woman who has low vision	the blind
a person who is deafblind a person who is deaf and low vision	the deaf and blind he is deaf, dumb and blind
a person who has epilepsy people with a seizure disorder	an epileptic a victim of epilepsy
a person who uses a wheelchair people who have a mobility impairment a person who walks with crutches	he/she is wheelchair bound he/she is confined to a wheelchair a cripple
a person who has quadriplegia people with paraplegia	a quadriplegic; a quad a paraplegic
he/she is of small or short stature a person with dwarfism	a dwarf a midget
he/she has a congenital disability	he/she has a birth defect
accessible buses, bathrooms, etc reserved parking for people with disabilities	handicapped buses, bathrooms, etc handicapped parking
seniors older individuals/person/adults older Americans/citizens <i>note: some individuals prefer "older"</i>	old people senior citizen(s) old men and women
nursing facility	nursing home

People with disabilities are, first and foremost, people. More than just a fad or political correctness, People First Language is an objective way of emphasizing each person's value, individuality and capabilities. It eliminates generalizations, assumptions and stereotypes by focusing on the person rather than the disability.



Why Is People First Language Important?

Every individual, regardless of gender, age, race or ability, deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. As part of the effort to end discrimination and segregation – in employment, education and our communities at large – it is important to eliminate prejudicial language.

About 54 million Americans – or one out of every five – have a disability. Their contributions enrich our communities and society as they live, work and share their lives.

People with disabilities continue to seek accurate portrayals that present a respectful, positive view of themselves as active participants of society in social, work and home environments. Additionally, people with disabilities are focusing attention on touch issues that affect quality of life, such as accessible transportation, housing, affordable health care, employment opportunities and discrimination.

Recognize that people with disabilities are ordinary people with common goals for a home, a job and a family. Talk about people in ordinary terms.

Words matter. Stereotypes die slowly. Using People First Language when you speak or write about people with disabilities helps eliminate patronizing prejudicial language.

Promote Understanding, Respect, Dignity and Positive Outlooks

- Ordinary things and accomplishments do not become extraordinary just because a person with a disability does them. What is extraordinary are the lengths people with disabilities must go to and the barriers they have to overcome to do the most ordinary things.
- Never equate the person with disability – in other words, don't refer to someone as an epileptic or a quadriplegic. These labels are simply medical diagnoses. Use People First Language to tell what a person has, not what a person is.
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations. Say, for example, "A man walks with crutches," not, "He is crippled."
- Avoid negative words that imply tragedy, such as "afflicted with," "suffers from," "victim of," "prisoner of" and "unfortunate."
- Use "handicap" to refer to a barrier created by people or the environment. Use "disability" to indicate a functional limitation that interferes with a person's mental, physical or sensory abilities, such as walking, talking, hearing and learning. For example say, "People with disabilities who use wheelchairs are handicapped by stairs."
- Do not refer to a person as "bound to" or "confined to" a wheelchair. Wheelchairs are liberating to people with disabilities because they provide mobility.
- Do not use the word "special," such as "special schools" or "special bus" because that implies segregation.
- Avoid cute euphemisms such as "physically challenged," "inconvenienced" and "differently abled."