

ACCESSIBILITY MATTERS!

A WAY WITH WORDS

Traditional language has ascribed words and phrases that demean people with disabilities are no longer acceptable. Attitudes and perceptions about people with disabilities is changing, and so is the appropriate language to use.

People with a disability are people. People without disability are also people. We are all people **first!** Put the person before the disability and describes what a person has, not who a person is. Say “person with a disability” rather than a “disabled person.”

WHEELCHAIR

Don't say “wheelchair-bound” or “confined to a wheelchair.” People use mobility or adaptive equipment as tools of greater independence.

HANDICAP

The term ‘the handicapped’ is offensive to people with a disability, because it is associated with ‘cap in hand’ and begging. We no longer have “handicap parking spaces”, it's “accessible parking.”

REFERENCING GROUPS

People are not conditions, do not label groups as “the quadriplegics,” “the epileptics,” “the blind.”

NEGATIVE DESCRIPTIONS

Avoid descriptions of “suffers from,” “a victim of,” “crippled,” or “invalid.” These portray unwanted sympathy or guilt, pity or insult.

COMPLIMENTARY

Don't portray people with disabilities as overly courageous, brave, special or superhuman because they have “overcome” a disability. It implies that it is unusual for people with disabilities to have talents or skills.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORDS

Inappropriate Language	Appropriate Language
Handicap	Disability
Aged, the elderly	Seniors
Suffers from...	Living with (state medical condition)
Autistic	A person with Autism
Blind, blind as a bat	A person with vision loss A person who is blind
Confined to a wheelchair Wheelchair bound	A person who uses a wheelchair
Crippled, lame, physically challenged	A person with a disability
Impaired, impairment	disabled, has a disability
Deaf and dumb, hearing impaired	A person who is deaf A person who is hard of hearing
Deaf-blind	A person who is deaf-blind
Epileptic	A person who has epilepsy
Stutterer, tongue-tied	A person who stutters A person with a communication disorder
Crazy, insane, nuts, psycho	A person with mental illness A person with a mental disorder
Mentally retarded, slow, or special	A person with an intellectual, cognitive, or developmental disability
Dwarf, midget	A person of small stature, short stature, A little person
Normal	A person without a disability A person who is not disabled.
Fit, attack, spell	Seizure
Physically challenged, handicapped, impaired	Person with a disability
Spastic	Person who has spasms

Be mindful, think before you speak! Practise **disability etiquette** to make people with **disabilities** feel welcome.