



A Way with Words and Images

We say that “words will never hurt me”, but sometimes words do hurt. There are ways to talk about ability and disability that aren’t hurtful. See the list below. Use appropriate words and encourage those around you to do the same.

INSTEAD OF	PLEASE USE
Birth defect, congenital defect, deformity	Person born with a disability, person who has a congenital disability
Blind (the), visually impaired (the)	Person who is blind, person with a visual impairment
Confined to a wheelchair, Wheelchair-bound	Person who uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user
Cripple, crippled, lame	Person with a disability, person with a mobility impairment, person who has a spinal cord injury, arthritis, etc.
Hard of hearing (the), hearing impaired	Person who is hard of hearing <u>Note:</u> These individuals are not deaf and may compensate for a hearing loss with an amplification device or system.
Deaf-mute, deaf and dumb	Person who is deaf Note: Culturally-linguistically deaf people (that is, sign language users) are properly identified as “the Deaf” (upper-case “D”). People who do not use sign language are properly referred to as “the deaf” (lower-case “d”) or “persons who are deaf”.
Epileptic (the)	Person who has epilepsy
Fit, attack, spell	Seizure
Handicapped (the)	Person with a disability
Handicapped parking, bathrooms	Accessible parking, accessible bathrooms

everyone is able

Inarticulate, incoherent

Person who has a speech disorder, person who has a speech disability

Insane (unsound mind), lunatic, maniac, mental patient, mentally diseased, mentally ill, neurotic, psychotic

Person with a mental health disability

Note: The term “insane” (unsound mind) should only be used in a strictly legal sense. The expression “person with a mental health disability” is broad. If relevant to the story, you can specify the type of disability, for example, “person who has depression” or “person who has schizophrenia”.



Invalid

Person with a disability

INSTEAD OF

PLEASE USE

Learning disabled,
learning disordered,
dyslexic (the)

Person with a learning disability

Mentally retarded
defective, feeble
minded, idiot, imbecile,
moron, retarded,
simple, mongoloid

Person with an intellectual disability
Note: If relevant to the story, specify the type of disability.

Normal

Person without a disability

Person who has trouble...

Person who needs...

Physically
challenged, physically
handicapped,
physically impaired

Person with a disability

Spastic

Person who has spasms

Suffers from, stricken
with, afflicted by

Person with a disability
Note: People with disabilities do not necessarily suffer.

Victim of cerebral
palsy, multiple
sclerosis, arthritis, etc.

Person who has cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc.
Person with a mobility impairment, person with a disability

Appropriate images

- Use images that show people with disabilities participating in society. Do not use images that isolate or call special attention to people with disabilities unless they are appropriate to the subject matter.
- Use actors or models with disabilities to portray people with disabilities.
- Present the typical individual who has a disability, rather than depicting him or her as a super-achiever.

everyone 
is able

A Way with Words and Images website:

http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/arc/way_with_words.pdf