



Disability Language

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Definition of Disability

- Has a physical/mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- The ADA also protects:
 - Has a record of such impairment
 - Is regarded as having such an impairment



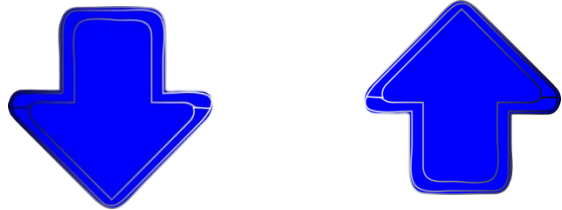
Independent Living Movement

- Civil rights movement of people of color and women's equality
- People with disabilities saw they were also being oppressed and discriminated against
- Changes were demanded for better systems



Language can reveal ableism!

Words reflect our values and beliefs about disability.



Our values and beliefs come out in our word choices.

We can consciously choose to use words and descriptions of disability that are neutral.



Neutral words... or not?

What's **wrong** with them?

That's so **sad**/I'm so **sorry**



They **can't** _____

special needs

high functioning/low functioning labels

hearing impaired/visually impaired

Neutral Language

Words or phrases that show a negative view of people with disabilities	What we say to model language that is neutral and non-judgmental
Handicapped person, Differently abled person	Person with a disability, Disabled person
Handicapped parking, Handicapped bathrooms	Accessible parking, Accessible bathrooms
Abled-bodied person, Normal person	Person without a disability, Non-disabled person
That's crazy, That's insane	That's wild
disABILITY	Disability
Special Accommodations	Accommodations

Person First vs. Identity First

Person First Language:

- Puts the person first
- Thought to eliminate assumptions by focusing on the person rather than the disability
- It indicates a disability as a secondary aspect of a person.
- “Person with a disability”

Person First

Words or phrases that show a negative view of people with disabilities	What we say to model language that is neutral and non-judgmental
Handicapped person, Differently abled person	Person with a disability
Is down's	Has Down syndrome
Is learning disabled	Has a learning disability
The blind	Person who is blind
Brain damaged person	Person with a brain injury
Normal person	Person without a disability

Person First vs. Identity First

Identity First Language:

- Emphasizes disability as an identity
- Disability is seen as part of a personal identity that can't be taken away.
- It indicates a disability as an inherent aspect of a person's identity.
- “Disabled person”

Identity First

Words or phrases that show a negative view of people with disabilities	What we say to model language that is neutral and non-judgmental
Handicapped person, Differently abled person	Disabled person
Is down's	Down syndrome person
Person with a learning disability	Learning disabled person
The blind	Blind person
Brain damaged person	Brain injured person
Normal person	Non-disabled person

Person First



Identity First



About Language

- People are too sensitive.
- It's all about political correctness.
- It changes all the time; I can't keep up!
- It's not like I'm trying to offend someone.
- What's the big deal?
- Americans are just getting soft.



Disability Etiquette 101

- Presume competence!
- Talk to the person.
- Ask the person to repeat something.
- It's okay to use phrases that everyone uses.
- Get to know someone as a whole person.
- Don't assume.
- Ask the person if they need assistance. If they say no, then that means NO.

Questions? Comments?



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Additional Resources

- National Center on Disability and Journalism: <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network: <https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/identity-first-language/>
- Disability is Natural: <https://www.disabilityisnatural.com/people-first-language.html>
- The Body is not an Apology: <https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/i-am-disabled-on-identity-first-versus-people-first-language/>
- Self Advocates Becoming Empowered Statement on the R-Word: <https://www.sabeusa.org/meet-sabe/policy-statements/r-word/>