

Words Matter

A guide to disability language etiquette

to be
like me

*Based on suggestions from various groups of people living with disabilities.
We recognize there are personal preferences, and our list continues to evolve.

PLEASE DON'T SAY	INSTEAD, PLEASE SAY
“That Down syndrome kid” (disability-first language)	“A person/individual with Down syndrome” (person-first language)
Wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair	Wheelchair user, person who uses a wheelchair
Handicapped parking	Accessible parking
Handicapped, crippled	Disability, Special needs <i>(sometimes acceptable for younger kids)</i>
Retarded, mentally challenged	Intellectual disability, IDD - Intellectual & Developmental Delays
Able-bodied, normal	People without disabilities
High/low functioning	Needs maximum support, moderate support, minimal support (describe level of support needed)
Hearing impaired	Deaf, hard of hearing
Learning problem	Learning difference
Non-verbal, mute	Communicates non-verbally, non-verbal communicator
Suffering from/afflicted with [name of disability]	Living with/has [name of disability]

If you don't know, it is OK to politely ask,
“How would you like me to refer to your disability?”

thankyou!