

LANGUAGE TIPS

Examples of Preferred Terms regarding People with Disabilities	
Acceptable - Neutral*	Unacceptable - Offensive
He had polio She has multiple sclerosis	He was afflicted with, stricken with, suffers from , victim of polio, multiple sclerosis, etc.
He has arthritis	He is arthritic
She has cerebral palsy	She is cerebral palsied , spastic
A person who has had a disability since birth A congenital disability	Birth defect
A person who uses a wheelchair A wheelchair user	Confined to a wheelchair / wheelchair bound
She has a disability	She is crippled
A person who has a speech disability A person who is hard of hearing A person who is deaf	Dumb, deaf mute, dummy (implies an intellectual disability occurs with a hearing loss or a speech disability)
A person who has a spinal curvature	A hunchback or a humpback
He has an emotional disability He has a psychiatric disability	He is chronically mentally ill , a nut , crazy , idiot , imbecile , moron
People of short stature	Midgets, dwarfs
A person who has a speech disability	Mute
A person without a disability as compared to a person with a disability	Normal person, whole person, healthy person, able-bodied person as compared to a disabled person
She lives with a disability	Overcame her disability
A person who has a developmental disability or intellectual disability	Retard, retardate, mentally retarded, feeble-minded, idiot
Use only when a person is actually ill	Sick
Use only when a person is actively being seen or treated by a health care provider	Stroke patient, multiple sclerosis patient
Seizure	Fit
Older people with disabilities	Frail

* Always subject to change and continuing debate

Other words to avoid because they are negative, reinforce stereotypes and evoke pity include:				
Abnormal	Invalid	Misshapen	Burden	Lame
Spaz	Disfigured	Maimed	Unfortunate	

Excerpted from: Kailes, J., Language is More Than a Trivial Concern, Edition 10, 2010: KAILES -Publications, Revised 1984-2010. <http://www.jik.com>, jik@pacbell.net.