

scientist, politician.

# People First

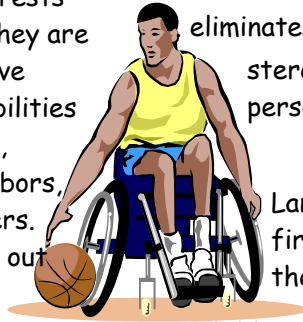
What do you call people

with Disabilities? Friends, neighbors, coworkers, dad, grandma, Joe's sister, big brother, George,

driver, dancer, mechanic, lawyer, judge, student, educator, home owner, renter, man, woman,

## Who are People with Disabilities?

People with disabilities are first and foremost *People*. They are people who have individual abilities interests and needs. For the most part, they are ordinary individuals seeking to live ordinary lives. People with Disabilities are moms, dads, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors, coworkers, students, and teachers. About 49 million Americans (one out of every five individuals) have a disability. Their contributions enrich our communities and society as they live and share their lives.



discussing disability issues. It eliminates generalizations, assumptions and stereotypes by focusing on the person rather than the disability. It eliminates generalizations, assumptions and stereotypes by focusing on the person rather than the disability.

As the term implies People First Language refers to the individual first and disability second. It's the difference in saying "autistic

child" and "a child *with* autism". While some people may not use People First Language, it's important you don't repeat negative terms that stereotype, devalue or discriminate, just as you would avoid racial slurs. Most of the time the disability isn't even relevant to the conversation you may be having.

## Changing Images

Historically, people with disabilities have been regarded as individuals to be pitied, feared or ignored.

People with disabilities continue to seek accurate portrayals that present a respectful, positive view of individuals as active participants of society, in regular social, work and home environments.

## Eliminating Stereotypes

Every individual regardless of sex, age, race or ability deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. As part of the effort to end discrimination and segregation in employment education and our communities, it is important to eliminate prejudicial language.

Like other minorities, the people with disabilities developed preferred terminology called *PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE*. More than a fad or political correctness, People First Language is an objective way of



## What should I say?

Be sensitive when choosing words you use. Here are a few guidelines on appropriate language.

- Recognize that people with disabilities are ordinary people with common goals for a home, a job and a family. Talk about people in ordinary terms.
- Never equate a person with a disability such as referring to someone as retarded or epileptic. These labels are simply medical diagnoses. Use People First Language to tell what a person HAS, not what a person IS.
- Emphasize abilities not limitations. Say, for example, "a man walks with crutches" instead of, " he is crippled."
- Avoid negative words that imply tragedy such as afflicted with, suffers, victim, prisoner and unfortunate.

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- Recognize that a disability is not a challenge to overcome, and avoid saying people succeed in spite of a disability. Ordinary things and accomplishments do not become extraordinary just because a person with a disability does them. What is extraordinary are the lengths people with disabilities have to go through and the barriers they have to overcome to do most ordinary things.
- Use handicap to refer to a barrier created by people or the environment. Use disability to indicate the functional limitation that interferes with a person's mental, physical or sensory abilities, such as walking, talking hearing and learning. For example, people with disabilities, who use wheelchairs, are handicapped by stairs.

- Do not refer to a person as bound to or confined to a wheelchair. Wheelchairs are liberating to people with disabilities because they provide mobility.
- Do not use special to mean segregated such as separate schools or buses for people with disabilities or to suggest a disability itself makes someone special.
- Avoid euphemisms such as physically challenged, inconvenienced and differently abled.
- Promote understanding, respect, dignity and positive outlooks.

*People First Language recognizes that individuals with disabilities are first and foremost people. It emphasizes each person's value, individuality, dignity and capabilities. The following examples provide guidance on what terms to use and which ones are inappropriate when talking or writing about people with disabilities.*

## People First Language to Use

- People/individuals with disabilities  
an adult who has a disability  
a child with a disability  
a person
- People without disabilities  
typical kids
- People with mental illness
- Accessible buses, bathrooms, parking, hotel rooms
- People with developmental disabilities
- A person who has Down Syndrome

## Instead of Labels that Stereotype & Devalue

- The handicapped the disabled
- Normal people/healthy individuals  
atypical kids
- The mentally ill; the emotionally disturbed; insane; crazy; demented; psycho; lunatic
- Handicapped buses, bathrooms, parking, hotel rooms
- retarded, the mentally retarded
- Downs kids, Mongoloid

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