

List of Acceptable Terms



Acceptable: Person with a disability.

Unacceptable: Cripple, cripples – the image conveyed is of a twisted, deformed, useless body.

Acceptable: Disability, a general term used for functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability, for example, to walk, hear or lift. It may refer to a physical, mental or sensory condition.

Unacceptable: Handicap, handicapped person or handicapped.

Acceptable: People with cerebral palsy, people with spinal cord injuries.

Unacceptable: Cerebral palsied, spinal cord injured, etc. Never identify people solely by their disability.

Acceptable: Person who had a spinal cord injury, polio, a stroke, etc. or a person who has multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, etc.

Unacceptable: Victim. People with disabilities do not like to be perceived as victims for the rest of their lives, long after any victimization has occurred.

Acceptable: Has a disability, has a condition of (spina bifida, etc.), or born without legs, etc.

Unacceptable: Defective, defect, deformed, vegetable. These words are offensive, dehumanizing, degrading and stigmatizing.

Acceptable: Deafness/hearing impairment. Deafness refers to a person who has a total loss of hearing. Hearing impairment refers to a person who has a partial loss of hearing within a range from slight to severe. Hard of hearing describes a hearing-impaired person who communicates through speaking and spear-heading, and who usually has listening and hearing abilities adequate for ordinary telephone communication. Many hard of hearing individuals use a hearing aid.

Unacceptable: Deaf and Dumb is as bad as it sounds. The inability to hear or speak does not indicate intelligence.

Acceptable: Person who has a mental or developmental disability.

Unacceptable: Retarded, moron, imbecile, and idiot. These are offensive to people who bear the label.

Acceptable: Use a wheelchair or crutches; a wheelchair user; walks with crutches.

Unacceptable: Confined/restricted to a wheelchair; wheelchair bound. Most people who use a wheelchair or mobility devices do not regard them as confining. They are viewed as liberating; a means of getting around.

Acceptable: Able-bodied; able to walk, see, hear, etc.; people who are not disabled.

Unacceptable: healthy, when used to contrast with "disabled." Healthy implies that the person with a disability is unhealthy. Many people with disabilities have excellent health.

Acceptable: People who do not have a disability.

Unacceptable: Normal. When used as the opposite of disabled, this implies that the person is abnormal. No one wants to be labeled as abnormal.

Acceptable: A person who has (name of disability.) Example: A person who has multiple sclerosis

Unacceptable: Afflicted with, suffers from. Most people with disabilities do not regard themselves as afflicted or suffering continually.

Unacceptable: Afflicted: A disability is not an affliction.