

Put the person before the disability

The way we use our language can have a profound effect on other people and overall community attitudes. To become an inclusive club and community the best way to reduce the stigma that appears to be attached to the word 'disability' is to start associating the word with other positive words and to shy away from negative derogatory words.

Labeling someone who has a disability greatly influences our perception about them and focuses on one aspect of the person, their disability, and neglects all the other notable aspects about the person. They could be a parent, musician or tennis player, but how would you know?

Putting the person before the disability is a simple way to ensure that the person is acknowledged first not the disability.

<i>Words to watch for and/or avoid</i>	<i>Acceptable Alternatives</i>
Abnormal, subnormal - negative terms that imply failure to function 'normally'	Specify the disability
Cripple, crippled - these terms convey an image of an ugly and twisted body	A physical disability or a mobility disability
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound, a wheelchair provides mobility not restriction	Uses a wheelchair or a wheelchair user
Afflicted with or suffering from - most people with disability do not see themselves as afflicted or suffering	The person has (specify the disability)
Mentally retarded, defective, feeble minded, moron, retarded - offensive and inaccurate	Person with an intellectual disability or person with a learning disability
Defective, deformed - degrading terms	Specify the disability
The blind	Person who is blind or person with a vision impairment
Mongol - outdated and derogatory	Person with Down syndrome
Spastic - offensive and inaccurate term used (most often) in reference to a person with cerebral palsy	Person with disability
Invalid	Person with disability
The deaf (community)	Acceptable in terms of the community
The deaf (individual person)	Person who is deaf
Insane, lunatic, maniac, mental patient, neurotic, psycho	person with a psychiatric disability or person with a mental illness or person with (specify the condition)

A few ideas:

- Communicate with the person in the same way no matter whether they have a disability or not.
- Listen to the individual's needs and don't prejudge their requirements.
- Every person has abilities, dreams, problems and interests so put them before their disability.
- Don't mention their disability unless it's absolutely necessary
- Focus on what the person can do rather than what they can't
- Be mindful of your attitude and the community attitude and how it might affect a person who has a disability. Try not to label or use derogatory language.
- Be specific about the person's disability. Avoid stereotypes and generalizations and never assume anything about them, just ask.

Appropriate terminology – Australian Sports Commission