

What's HOT and what's NOT A-Z Tips for dealing with people with a Disability

Ability

When communicating with or about people with a disability remember they may have only one disability – but they have many abilities.

A paraplegic, a haemophiliac

The use of 'A' before the noun categorises the person based on their disability. Use person with haemophilia, man who has paraplegia.

Abnormal or sub-normal

Not acceptable. Use people or person with a disability.

Afflicted with or suffering from

Most people with a disability do not see themselves as afflicted or suffering.

Assistance

Always ask a person with a disability if they need help before rushing in.

Blind

Use only to describe a person who is really blind. In other cases, use person with vision impairment.

Confined to a wheelchair

A wheelchair is not confining, it provides mobility to those who can't walk.

Cripple

Only to be used as part of a direct quote or an organisation's name.

Deaf

Only use if a person really is Deaf. In other cases use person with a hearing impairment.

Defect

Not acceptable. Use congenital disability, blind from birth.

Disabled

Use people or person with a disability, not disabled person. The person always comes first.

Disabled Toilet or disabled parking space

The toilet or car park is not disabled! Use accessible toilet or accessible parking space.

Fits

The preferred term is seizures.

Guide Dogs

Never pat or touch a guide dog while the dog is working or when the dog is in its harness. Always ask permission and remember that sometimes the owner may say no.

Handicap

This word should only be used to describe the obstacles that restrict an individual's participation, e.g. a person is handicapped by the lack of accessible transport.

Intellectual Disability

Terms such as mongol, retard or mentally retarded are outdated. Use people with an intellectual disability.

Mental Illness

Do not use insane, lunatic, mad or crazy. Use mental illness or the appropriate clinical name e.g. person with schizophrenia.

Mongolism

Use person with Down's syndrome.

Normal

This is a statistical term. Use person without a disability or terms such as sighted or hearing.

Patient

Should only be used when a person is actually receiving medical care. Use the same adjective as you would for a person without a disability.

Patronising Language

Don't describe people as brave, special or suffering. Disability is part of everyday life.

People with disabilities

Can imply that people have more than one disability. Use people with a disability.

Psychiatric disability

Can be used to describe a mental illness. Don't use insane, lunatic, mad or crazy.

Retarded

Derogatory, outdated and unacceptable – instead use people with an intellectual disability

Spastic

Derogatory, outdated and unacceptable, unless used as part of an organisation's name. In most cases person with cerebral palsy is the acceptable alternative.

Sufferer

People don't suffer just because they have a disability

The blind, the deaf

Avoid using 'the' in this manner as it unconsciously eliminates the person and creates a generalisation based purely on disability.

Vegetables

Are what you cook and eat – not people who are unconscious or in a coma.

Victim

People are victims of war, crime or exploitative wages. People with a disability prefer not to be referred to as victims.

Visual impairment

Implies a person is unattractive to look at! Use vision impairment or sight impairment.

Wheelchair user

When talking to a person who uses a wheelchair place yourself at eye level. Do not push anyone who uses a wheelchair unless you are asked to.

For further information contact:

**Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care
Central Office**

Level 5, 83 Clarence Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 8270 2000

TTY: (02) 8270 2167 (for people who are deaf)

Email: info@dadhc.nsw.gov.au