



## What To Say

.....

The language of disability changes quickly and different terms are used within and outside of Australia. It can be political, it can be very personal and can sometimes be quite confusing.

'People with disability', means anyone with sensory or physical impairments, hidden impairments, learning disabilities or mental health conditions.

Remember the first rule about disability language: don't panic! What you say isn't as important as making the effort to say it. If you have good intentions and treat everyone with respect, you'll get by. But here are a few examples of words we recommend:

Words we recommend...	Words we don't recommend...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• people / person with disability</li><li>• disabled person / people (<u>Please note:</u> that use of 'disabled people' from the social model lexicon is used by more politicised people)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• person with a disability</li><li>• person with disabilities</li><li>• differently abled / diffability</li><li>• 'the' Disabled</li><li>• handicapped</li><li>• physically challenged</li><li>• someone who can't [hear, speak, walk, etc]</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• people / person without disability / non-disabled person</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• able bodied person</li><li>• normal</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• wheelchair user</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• wheelchair bound</li><li>• bound / confined to a wheelchair</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• blind person / people</li><li>• vision impaired person / people</li><li>• person with low vision</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the Blind</li><li>• person without sight</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deaf person / people</li><li>• Auslan user</li><li>• hard of hearing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the Deaf</li><li>• deaf and dumb</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intellectual impairment</li> <li>• learning disability</li> <li>• learning difficulty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• retarded / retard</li> <li>• special needs</li> <li>• slow learner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• person of short stature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• midget</li> <li>• dwarf</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mental health issues / condition</li> <li>• mental health service user</li> <li>• mental health system survivor (or just “survivor”)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mental health problems</li> <li>• mental</li> <li>• mentally ill</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal assistant / PA</li> <li>• support worker</li> <li>• access assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carer (unless a person with disability uses the term themselves)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accessible toilet</li> <li>• adapted toilet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disabled toilet</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accessible parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disabled parking</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has</li> <li>• experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• suffers from</li> <li>• afflicted with</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how can we assist?</li> <li>• what can we do to [...]?</li> <li>• do you have any access requirements?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what’s your problem?</li> <li>• what’s wrong with you?</li> <li>• do you have a disability?</li> </ul>

And here’s some words we never, ever use...

victim      unfortunate      special      slow      moron      backward

mad      freak      spastic      spaz      cripple..... crip!

even if some people with disability use some of these terms about themselves!

Please let us know if you’d like this information in another format.

Produced with material from Arts Access Australia’s advice sheet on disability language.