A Way with Words and Images

We say that “words will never hurt me”, but sometimes words do hurt. There are ways to talk about ability and disability that aren’t hurtful. See the list below. Use appropriate words and encourage those around you to do the same.

**INSTEAD OF PLEASE USE**

Birth defect, congenital defect, deformity

Blind (the), visually impaired (the)

Confined to a wheelchair,

Wheelchair-bound

Person born with a disability, person who has a congenital disability

Person who is blind, person with a visual impairment

Person who uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user

Cripple, crippled, lame Person with a disability, person with a mobility impairment,

 person who has a spinal cord injury, arthritis, etc.

Hard of hearing (the), hearing impaired

Deaf-mute, deaf and

dumb

Person who is hard of hearing

Note: These individuals are not deaf and may compensate for a hearing loss with an amplification device or system.

Person who is deaf

Note: Culturally-linguistically deaf people (that is, sign language users) are properly identified as “the Deaf” (upper-case “D”). People who do not use sign language are properly referred to as “the deaf” (lower-case “d”) or “persons who are deaf”.

Epileptic (the) Person who has epilepsy

Fit, attack, spell Seizure

Handicapped (the) Person with a disability

Handicapped parking, bathrooms

Accessible parking, accessible bathrooms

Inarticulate, incoherent Person who has a speech disorder, person who has a speech disability

Insane (unsound mind), lunatic, maniac, mental patient, mentally diseased, mentally ill, neurotic, psychotic

Person with a mental health disability

Note: The term “insane” (unsound mind) should only be used in a strictly legal sense. The expression “person with a mental health disability” is broad. If relevant to the story, you can specify the type of disability, for example, “person who has depression” or “person who has schizophrenia”.

Invalid Person with a disability

**INSTEAD OF PLEASE USE**

Learning disabled, learning disordered, dyslexic (the)

Mentally retarded defective, feeble minded, idiot, imbecile, moron, retarded, simple, mongoloid

Person with a learning disability

Person with an intellectual disability

Note: If relevant to the story, specify the type of disability.

Normal Person without a disability

Person who has trouble… Person who needs…

Physically

challenged, physically handicapped, physically impaired

Person with a disability

Spastic Person who has spasms

Suffers from, stricken with, afflicted by

Victim of cerebral

palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc.

Person with a disability

Note: People with disabilities do not necessarily suffer.

Person who has cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc. Person with a mobility impairment, person with a disability

**Appropriate images**

 Use images that show people with disabilities participating in society. Do not use images that isolate or call special attention to people with disabilities unless they are appropriate to the subject matter.

 Use actors or models with disabilities to portray people with disabilities.

 Present the typical individual who has a disability, rather than depicting him or her as a super-achiever.

A Way with Words and Images website:

<http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/arc/way_with_words.pdf>