

# Language Matters!

Using “people first” language reinforces both a positive and accurate image of individuals with disabilities that doesn’t reinforce stereotypes. Individuals with disabilities should be identified by the fact that they are a person, not by their disability. This guidance will also increase your comfort level in speaking and interacting with individuals with disabilities and emphasize their abilities, not their limitations, but each individual’s preference is unique.

PREFERRED	INSTEAD OF
student with a disability	handicapped or disabled student
child with Down syndrome	Down’s child
a girl with autism	autistic girl, she’s autistic
person who has cerebral palsy	person suffering from cerebral palsy
girl that uses a wheelchair/mobility device	she’s bound or confined to a wheelchair
an individual with cognitive/intellectual disability	mentally retarded student
person with a communication/speech/language disability	mute, can’t talk
children with developmental disabilities	developmentally delayed, slow, not normal
people who are deaf or hard of hearing	deaf and dumb, the deaf
people who are blind or have a vision disability	blind people, the blind
children who are typically developing	typically developing children/normal
students with physical disabilities	crippled, physically challenged, handicapped
congenital disability	birth defect/abnormality
students that are medically involved	sick, medically fragile
person with an emotional disability	emotionally disturbed, mentally ill
person of short stature	dwarfs & midgets
accessible bus/bathrooms reserved for people with disabilities	handicapped/short bus, handicapped bathrooms
general education	regular education

# Using “People First” Language when Speaking and Writing About Individuals with Disabilities

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## DIRECTIONS:

Restate each of the following sentences using more empowering/preferred language.  
Correct these sentences using more empowering and “people-first” language.

1. What playground activities would be good for autistic students?
2. Playing on the playground is so essential for those ADHD children.
3. There are several deaf kids at the school that can't hear at all.
4. They want to design a playground so that handicapped children can play too!
5. His mother is crippled and can't get on the structure to play with her son.
6. The Braille on the panel allows blind people to participate in the game.
7. Her friend, Susan, suffers from cerebral palsy.
8. The typically developing children have nothing fun to do there.
9. The boy is bound to a wheelchair.
10. They have a mentally retarded child.
11. Kids afflicted with emotional disturbances frequent the playground nearby.
12. The school has several Down's students that are included in regular physical education classes?

# Disability Etiquette: 10 Helpful Tips

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1. Let the “golden rule” and common friendship break down any barriers you may feel, and celebrate the similarities and differences in people of all abilities.
2. If a person is at a much lower height than you due to their disability, sit in a chair if possible.
3. Speak at a normal volume and directly to individuals who are deaf, not to his or her interpreter or companion.
4. Identify yourself to people with vision disabilities and offer your arm for the individual to hold if her or she asks for guidance.
5. If you don't understand something someone says, ask the person to repeat or write it down.
6. Answer questions your child may have about differences, special equipment, or disabilities- don't ignore them!
7. Use “people first” language. The individual should not be defined by their disability.
8. Be proactive when setting up rooms for accessible routes and preparing for meetings/ events by asking attendees if they need any special accommodations.
9. Service animals are working and should not be touched or distracted.
10. Speak and interact with individuals with intellectual disabilities in a way that is age appropriate.