

# Choosing Words with Dignity

## *Positive Language Empowers*

People with disabilities, like other minority groups, are actively seeking full civil rights and acceptance as equals in their communities.

Your portrayal of individuals with disabilities can greatly affect the public's perception of their worth. What you write, and the words you use, can enhance their dignity and promote positive attitudes about their abilities.

When writing about people with disabilities, let your words emphasize the person's worth and abilities, not their disabling condition. Also, refer to the person first rather than the disability.

### *Phrases & Words to Use*

Person with mental retardation  
Person who is blind, person who is visually impaired  
Person with a disability  
Person who is deaf, person who is hard of hearing  
Person who has multiple sclerosis  
Person with cerebral palsy  
Person with epilepsy; person with seizure disorder  
Person who uses a wheelchair  
Person who has muscular dystrophy  
Physically disabled  
Person without a disability  
Unable to speak; non-verbal  
Seizure  
Successful, productive  
Person with psychiatric disability  
Says she/he has a disability  
Person who has/is affected  
Person with cerebral palsy  
Condition  
Has  
Person who has Down syndrome  
Person with autism  
Children with special needs

### *Phrases & Words to Avoid*

Retarded; mentally defective  
The blind  
The disabled; handicapped  
Suffers a hearing loss, the deaf  
Afflicted by MS  
CP victim  
Epileptic  
Wheelchair bound; confined to a wheelchair  
Stricken by MD  
Crippled; lame; deformed  
Normal person  
Dumb; mute  
Fit  
Drain; burden; poor; unfortunate; courageous  
Crazy; nuts  
Admits she/he has a disability  
Afflicted  
Cerebral Palsied  
Disease  
Suffers from  
Person with Down's  
Autistic person  
Special needs children  
Victim  
Poor (disabilities have nothing to do with one's wealth)

### *For more information contact:*

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