

## LANGUAGE TIPS

Examples of Preferred Terms regarding People with Disabilities	
Acceptable - Neutral*	Unacceptable - Offensive
He had polio She has multiple sclerosis	He was afflicted with, stricken with, suffers from, victim of polio, multiple sclerosis, etc.
He has arthritis	He is arthritic
She has cerebral palsy	She is cerebral palsied, spastic
A person who has had a disability since birth A congenital disability	Birth defect
A person who uses a wheelchair A wheelchair user	Confined to a wheelchair / wheelchair bound
She has a disability	She is crippled
A person who has a speech disability A person who is hard of hearing A person who is deaf	Dumb, deaf mute, dummy (implies an intellectual disability occurs with a hearing loss or a speech disability)
A person who has a spinal curvature	A hunchback or a humpback
He has an emotional disability He has a psychiatric disability	He is chronically mentally ill, a nut, crazy, idiot, imbecile, moron
People of short stature	Midgets, dwarfs
A person who has a speech disability	Mute
A person without a disability as compared to a person with a disability	Normal person, whole person, healthy person, able-bodied person as compared to a disabled person
She lives with a disability	Overcame her disability
A person who has a developmental disability or intellectual disability	Retard, retardate, mentally retarded, feeble-minded, idiot
Use only when a person is actually ill	Sick
Use only when a person is actively being seen or treated by a health care provider	Stroke patient, multiple sclerosis patient
Seizure	Fit
Older people with disabilities	Frail

\* Always subject to change and continuing debate

### Other words to avoid because they are negative, reinforce stereotypes and evoke pity include:

Abnormal	Invalid	Misshapen	Burden	Lame
Spaz	Disfigured	Maimed	Unfortunate	

Excerpted from: Kailes, J., Language is More Than a Trivial Concern, Edition 10, 2010: KAILES -Publications, Revised 1984-2010. <http://www.jik.com>, [jik@pacbell.net](mailto:jik@pacbell.net).