



THE LANGUAGE OF DISABILITY: DO'S AND DON'T'S: TOP 10

DON'T USE

USE

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| 1. wheelchair-bound/confined to | Wheelchair user/ uses a wheelchair |
| 2. suffers from/afflicted with/crippled by/victim of | These terms make assumptions about how the disabled person feels about his/her disability. Use "has" and the name of condition (e.g., has cerebral palsy, has paraplegia, etc.) |
| 3. the disabled/the blind/the deaf | Always use as an adjective rather than a noun – disabled person, blind filmmaker, deaf man or woman |
| 4. retarded (e.g., mentally retarded)/retard | Intellectual disability; cognitive disability; developmental disability (when using these terms, however, it is important to understand the distinction among them) |
| 5. Handicapped (handicap) handicapped | In general: If you're not writing about sports, don't use it! Use disability, disabled person, person with a disability. |
| Handicapped parking, restroom, etc | Accessible parking, restroom, etc. |
| 6. midget/dwarf | Little person (Dwarf is acceptable only if the subject actually has dwarfism.) Keep in mind: Anyone with dwarfism is a little person, but every little person is not a dwarf. |
| 7. deaf-mute/deaf and dumb hearing-impaired | deaf (medically deaf), Deaf (culturally Deaf), hard of hearing |
| 8. Physically challenged/differently abled | Avoid outdated or saccharine terms and euphemisms. Use disabled as an adjective (e.g., disabled sportscaster) or person-first language (e.g., person with a disability) |
| 9. Overcoming/inspiring/brave/courageous | Avoid patronizing and condescending descriptives – describe the person's accomplishments without value judgment or interpretation |
| 10. Special / Special needs | Do not use when referring to disabled people |

Compiled by Inclusion in the Arts