

# The Power of Language and Labels

## The Power of Language and Disability Etiquette Tips

For Article Click Here --> [A Few Words About People First Language by Kathie Snow](#)

More Language Suggestions

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS – See Handicap meaning No. 1.

AFFLICTED / AFFLICTION – Connotes pain and suffering. Most individuals with disabilities are not in pain, nor do they suffer because of their disability.

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS – See Handicap meaning NO. 2.

CONFINED TO A WHEELCHAIR – People with disabilities are no more “confined to a wheelchair” than people with poor vision are “confined to their eyeglasses.” Both wheelchairs and eyeglasses are tools used by the individual to increase their independence. Try this language instead - “uses a wheelchair for mobility”, or “has a wheelchair”, or “gets around by wheelchair.”

CRIPPLED – avoid this word unless talking about an object.

DEAF AND DUMB OR DEAF MUTE – People who are deaf have healthy vocal cords. If they do not speak, that is because they do not hear the correct way to pronounce words. Try “person who is deaf” or “person with a hearing impairment.”

DISABLED – ADJECTIVE – Do not use as a noun. Bad usage: “The disabled population is increasing.” Better: “The number of people who have disabilities is increasing.”

DISABLED PERSON – Try using “person with a disability”, thus putting the person before the disability.

DISABILITY – A medically defined condition resulting from a brain injury, accident, virus, a combination of genetic factors, or trauma. Say “People with disabilities” or persons with a disability”, not “disabled people.”

DISEASE – Most people with disabilities are as healthy as anyone. Use “condition.”

DRAIN AND BURDEN – Try “added responsibility.”

GIMP – Slang used by people with disabilities to mock society’s attitudes towards them, however, can have negative connotations if used by a person who is not disabled.

HANDICAP – Do not use to describe a person’s physical condition. Persons with disabilities are not necessarily handicapped. The term handicap refers to environmental barriers preventing or making it difficult for full participation or integration.

1. Attitudes and objects in the environment that hinder one’s functioning; examples are steps, steep ramps, condescending people.
2. An athletic event in which difficulties are imposed on the superior, or advantages are given to the inferior, to make their chances of winning equal. Some individuals with

Disabilities may call themselves “handicappers” to show that they are capable of setting their own odds and they are in control of their own lives. However, this term is not widely accepted.

HANDICAPPED PERSON – A better description is a “person with a disability.”

INCONVENIENCE– Preferred term. This word does not have any bad connotation. It also puts the disability in perspective.

INVALID – This word means literally “not valid”. Everybody is valid.

PATIENT – Use this term only when referring to someone who is in a hospital or under a doctor’s immediate care.

POOR – Avoid this word unless you are talking about a person of low financial status. A person’s financial status need not be related to his/her disability.

UNFORTUNATE – Adjective that describes someone with bad luck, not a person with a disability.

VICTIM – A person with a disability was not sabotaged, nor was the individual necessarily in a car, plane or train accident. Having a disability need not make a person a victim.