



Person First Language: It's About Respect

When you address an individual with a disability, you must refer to the person first and their disability second, if it is even necessary to mention it. A person is not defined by their disability, it is simply a **part** of who they are. You be conscientious about how you refer to the person in relation to the disability. If you are curious about how someone prefers to be referred to, just ask them!

 Try This...	 ...Not This
Kevin, who uses a wheelchair	Kevin, who is wheelchair bound
Juan, who has a cognitive disability	Juan, who is retarded
Mila, who has autism	Mila, who is autistic
Emily was born with a congenital disability	Emily has birth defects
There's the accessible restroom	There's the handicapped restroom
Chase receives special education services	Chase is a special education student
Abby has a learning disability	Abby is learning disabled
A person with Down's Syndrome	A Down's person
They are a little person	They are a midget
Ryan's non-disabled peers	Ryan's normal/healthy peers
Mia uses crutches	Mia is crippled

Notice that this is not a comprehensive list. Therefore, you need to identify what makes a comment respectful and apply it when referring to people with disabilities. Comments that are respectful always emphasize ability, not limitations and identify the individual as a person, above all other things.

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug." - Mark Twain