



Language dos and don'ts

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Acknowledgement

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Purpose, audience and objectives

Purpose	Language and how people with disabilities are portrayed has a potential to create a comprehensive understanding of disability and promote positive attitudes towards them. This basic guide provides the reader with the right language for respectful communication with people with disabilities.
Audience	It is one of a series of short guides developed by Sightsavers, within Futuremakers by Standard Chartered , and specifically written with Youth Business International programme partners in mind. While advice included in the document is more targeted towards YBI's youth entrepreneurship programme, we have tried to make these relevant to all Futuremakers projects.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To build greater disability confidence of the reader and how partners can better include youth with disabilities in their Futuremakers projects.2. To give specific examples, advice and simple steps on how to adapt projects to be more inclusive of youth with disabilities.

Introduction

Words make the world. Every language is a product of words and without using the right language in our daily interactions, we cannot communicate. For persons with disabilities, using the right words to address them is fundamental to their communication, sense of inclusion and self-confidence. This basic guide provides you with the right language for a respectful communication with a person with disability. Please note that this is produced in the English language and for some languages, like French, some of the terminologies used here might not be applicable.

Key principle

Our approach to defining disability or adopting any disability-inclusive language is fundamentally the rights-based approach which is embedded in the principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Article 1 of this convention clearly defines who is a person with a disability.

Disability Inclusion Language

The best name to call people is the name they tell you to use!

Instead of...	Use
Wheelchair bound or confined to a wheelchair	Wheelchair user – remember that the chair liberates the user's mobility.
Able bodied, normal	Non-disabled – 'able bodied' implicitly equates disability with physical impairment. Diversity is normal, and disability is intrinsic to that diversity.
Hidden disabilities	Non-visible disabilities
Cripple, invalid, handicapped, special, challenged, handicapable, diF-abled, spastic, differently abled, victim, crip	<p>Person with a disability or person with a named impairment e.g. person with cerebral palsy.</p> <p>Some individuals feel empowered by 'identity first' language and choose to be called 'disabled persons.' If an individual asks that you use identity-first language to refer to them, respect their wishes, but when speaking broadly about the disability community use 'persons or people with disabilities' in line with the global standard outlined in the CRPD.</p> <p>Do not assume that the language a person uses to describe themselves is necessarily the language you should use to describe them – ask individuals how they would like others to refer to them.</p>
The deaf, the blind, the disabled	<p>Avoid collective nouns that imply millions of diverse individuals belong to a uniform group. When referring to the disability community as a whole, use 'persons with disabilities.'</p> <p>The exception being 'the Deaf' with a capital D. This is the preferred term for many pre-lingually deaf people who use sign language and see themselves as a cultural minority that is distinct from a 'disability' community.</p>
Neurodiversity – a term used to describe people with a wide range of neurological developmental conditions such as autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)	<p>Person with dyslexia, person with ADHD, person with autism, etc.</p> <p>Some people prefer 'identify first' language and choose to describe themselves as 'dyslexic' or 'autistic.' Always ask individuals how they prefer to be described.</p>

Fits, spells, attacks	Seizures
'Suffers from' or 'is afflicted by' (e.g. asthma, hearing loss)	Has – for example 'has asthma', 'has cerebral palsy'.
Deaf and dumb, deaf-mute	A 'deaf person.' Or if appropriate, a 'sign language user.'
Dwarf, midget	Someone of short stature. Some prefer 'a Little Person,' others prefer 'someone with restricted growth' (some individuals prefer the word 'dwarf'). Always ask individuals how they prefer to be described.
Facially deformed, ugly	Some campaigners for face equality prefer the term 'facial disfigurement,' while others in the movement may prefer 'facial difference.'
Hearing impaired	A deaf person, person who is deaf, or a person who is hard of hearing or who is deafened.
Learning disability, retarded, slow learner, mental disability, special, intellectually handicapped, mentally retarded, developmentally delayed, sub-normal	Person with an intellectual disability.
Mental patient, psycho, crazy, insane, a psychiatric case, mental	Person who has a mental health condition.
Speech disorder, speech difficulties	Person with a speech impairment or who has a speech disability. Person who stammers, person who stutters.
The blind	People with visual impairments, blind people, people who are blind or partially sighted. Remember many blind people have some residual vision.

Conclusion

Disability is an evolving concept. The terminologies in this guide are in alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, ensure you respect individual differences.

Now that I know, what do I need to do?

- Use appropriate language and terminology to promote disability equality in programming
- Foster an organisational culture that encourages respectful language around disability, and actively counters disability stereotypes
- Develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of interactions with young people with disabilities within programming to boost disability confidence

Further reading:

The United Nations disability-inclusive communications guidelines:

https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_disability-inclusive_communication_guidelines.pdf

We work with partners in low and middle income countries to eliminate avoidable blindness and promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

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