

People with disabilities

Appropriate terminology in brief

- **Put the person first. Say "person with a disability"** or e.g. person with autism rather than "disabled person."
In French: "Personne en situation de handicap"
- **Avoid group designations such as "the blind".**
- **Do not use jargony or euphemistic terms like "physically challenged" and "differently abled"** as many people with disabilities dislike them.
- **Do not imply disease when discussing abilities** (even if they result from a prior disease episode).
- **Individuals with disabilities should not be referred to as patients** unless they are referenced in the context of a hospital or a clinical setting.
- It is safest to **refer to people who have hearing loss but who communicate in spoken language as "hard of hearing" and to people with profound hearing losses as Deaf or deaf.**
- "Special needs" refers to accommodations or adjustments required to establish that the person can work / visit – or accessibility.
- People have their own preferences and are experts on themselves; if you are not sure of the term you should use, ask ☺

Appropriate wording	Inappropriate wording
person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability	retarded; mentally defective
person who is blind, person who is visually impaired	the blind
person with a disability	the disabled; handicapped
person who is deaf	the deaf; deaf and dumb
person who is hard of hearing	suffers a hearing loss
person who has multiple sclerosis	afflicted by MS
person with cerebral palsy	CP victim
person with epilepsy, person with seizure disorder	epileptic
person who has muscular dystrophy	stricken by MD
person with a physical disability	crippled; lame; deformed
person with mental health issues or person with psychiatric disability	crazy; nuts
person who is successful, productive	has overcome his/her disability; is courageous



Adapted by the Diversity & Inclusion Programme, from the following resources:

- United Spinal Association, Disability Etiquette, unitedspinal.org
- Disability Etiquette Guide, A Cook Ross INC. Publication, Spring 2014
- askearn.org & askjan.org

For further information in French, consult the [Workplace Accessibility seminar video](#) (CERN, 2018)