



HINTS FOR USING CORRECT TERMINOLOGY

USE	AVOID	REASON
Persons with disabilities Disabled people	Physically challenged Differently abled	The disability rights movement of South Africa accepts both these terms
Johnny is a child with cerebral palsy	Johnny suffers from cerebral palsy Johnny is afflicted with cerebral palsy Johnny is a victim of cerebral palsy	All 3 cast disabilities as negative. "Suffers from" indicates ongoing pain and torment, which is not the case for most people with disabilities. "Afflicted with" denotes a disease, which most disabilities are not. "Victim of" implies that a crime is being committed on the person who has a disability.
'uses a wheelchair'	'wheelchair bound' or 'confined to a wheelchair'	People see their wheelchairs as a convenient mode of transportation, not prisons, and the "bound/confined" phrase belies the fact that many people with motor disabilities engage in activities without their wheelchairs, including driving and sleeping.
'disability'	'handicap' 'cripple(d)' Differently abled 'physically / mentally challenged (who isn't?)'	The word "handicap" derives from the phrase "cap in hand", referring to a beggar, and is despised by most people with disabilities.
'able-bodied' 'people without disabilities'	'normal' 'whole'	These terms are inappropriate and inaccurate.
'client' 'customer'	'patient'	Most disabilities are not a disease. Do not call person with a disability a "patient" unless referring to a hospital setting. In an occupational and physical therapy context, "client" or "customer" is preferred.
'person living with AIDS' Person with diabetes	'AIDS victim' 'she's a diabetic'	Some diseases by legal definition are considered disabilities. Victimization imagery or defining the person by the disease is inappropriate.
Deaf	'Deaf-mute' 'Deaf and dumb'	People who consider themselves as part of Deaf culture refer to themselves as "Deaf" with a capital "D". Because their culture derives from their language, they may be identified in the same way as other cultural groups, for example "Shangaan".
'born without arms' 'congenital disability'	'deformed' 'deformity' 'birth defect'	A person may be "born without arms" or "has a congenital disability," but is probably not defective.
'person with Down's Syndrome' 'person with cerebral palsy' 'person with epilepsy'	'Mongol' 'Mongoloid' 'cerebral palsied' 'spastic' 'epileptic'	These terms define the person by their condition, and should be avoided at all costs. Hint : Always refer to the person first, and then the disability
"person with an intellectual disability", or "person with a psychiatric disability"	'mentally retarded' 'insane' 'brain damaged'	These terms have a negative connotation.

0861 APD INFO
0861 273 4636



Western Cape Association for Persons with Disabilities

Physical address : 2 Begonia Street, Milnerton, 7441

Postal address : PO Box 1544, Milnerton, 7435

Telephone : (021) 5552881

Facsimile : (021) 5552888

E-mail : director@wcapd.org.za

Website : www.wcapd.org.za

Facebook : [westerncape.apd](https://www.facebook.com/westerncape.apd)



Printed with funding from
the National Lottery
Distribution Trust Fund