

**Inclusive Terminology 101**

One way that we demonstrate our commitment to accessibility is by being informed on appropriate language to use. Words matter – for example, handicap is no longer an appropriate term to use.

Below is a quick guide on terminology and which terms to say adios to. This is intended as a starting point, not a complete guide

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Outdated word:** | **Appropriate word:** | **Notes:** |
| Handicapped, crippled, cripple  | Accessible, disabled | Example – “accessible restroom”, “accessible parking spot”, person with a disability |
| Differently abled  | Disability, disabled  | This is a made up word typically used by those not comfortable with disability and has no meaning to people with disabilities. Instead, use disability. See article below on #SayTheWord  |
| Special Needs, Special | Person with a Disability, Student with a Disability | Using this term is condescending and makes it appear that providing disability access is optional. It’s the law (federal/state/ local) and there’s nothing special about that. |
| Wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair | Person with a disability, person who uses a wheelchair | No one is “bound” to a wheelchair.  Wheelchair users transfer in/out of their chairs daily. |
| Retard, mentally challenged | Intellectual or developmental disability, cognitive disability |  |
| Crazy, insane, bonkers, deranged | Wild, wacky, out of control, etc | Using crazy and insane sends the message that it is okay to minimize mental illness and can be hurtful to those with mental illness.  |
| Hearing impaired, mute, deaf and dumb, deaf-mute | Deaf or Hard of Hearing; communicates in ASL (if applicable), has hearing loss, late deafened. | Hearing impaired is not used because the word impaired implies there is something wrong with the individual.   Avoid saying mute or dumb.Not all deaf/hard of hearing individuals know or use American Sign Language.  Some wear hearing aids, cochlear implants or no hearing devices at all, some lipread, others do not. |
| (space intentionally left blank) | Blind, low vision | Vision loss varies by individual, use the term they use to describe themselves, not all blind/low vision individuals are easily identifiable.  Some may use a service dog, a cane – you will not always be able to identify their disability. |
| Seeing Eye Dog  | Service animal  | Not every blind individual uses a service animal or a cane. Service animals are working dogs, so avoid petting them as it can distract them from the assistance they provide their handlers.  |
|  |  |  |

**Additional Resources:**

[Disability Language Style Guide](https://ncdj.org/style-guide/) - Guide with almost 200 words commonly used when referring to disability, developed by the National Cnter on Disability at Arizona State University

[Disability Writing and Journalism Guidelines](https://cdrnys.org/disability-writing-journalism-guidelines/) - Guide intended for members of the media, focused on learning about the Disability Community and how to talk about disability

[Say The Word:](https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/health-wellness/2021/06/11/disabled-not-special-needs-experts-explain-why-never-use-term/7591024002/) article on disability language including Lawrence Carter-Long’s #SayTheWord Campaign

[DOJ Guide on Service Animals](https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm)