



PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE

Best Buddies promotes social inclusion and respect for all people. The easiest way to show respect is in how we speak about people. People-first language is an approach that many organizations and people in the disability rights movement use when speaking about our peers with disabilities.

The basic tenant of people-first language is the power and importance of recognizing a fellow person as a human being above all else. When we recognize people with disabilities as people (first), the fundamental respect warranted to another person is easier for us to realize.

People-first language recognizes that individuals with disabilities are— first and foremost— people. It emphasizes **each person's value, individuality, dignity, and capabilities.**

When choosing words to use about people with disabilities, refer to the person first, not the disability. A person with an intellectual or developmental disability should not be described as a ***“disabled person;”*** rather ***“a person with an intellectual or developmental disability”*** instead. By doing this, we place the emphasis on the person, not the disability.

By using people-first language, we are helping to eliminate the negative stereotypes and limitations that others often ascribe to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Examples of People-First Language:

Say:	Instead of:
People with disabilities.	The disabled.
He has a disability	He's mentally retarded.
She has autism (or an autism diagnosis).	She's autistic
He has a diagnosis of Down syndrome.	He's Downs.
She has a learning disability (diagnosis).	She's learning disabled.
He has a physical disability (diagnosis).	He's a quadriplegic/crippled.
She's of short stature/she's a little person.	She's a dwarf/midget.
He has a mental health diagnosis.	He's emotionally disturbed/mentally ill
She uses a wheelchair/mobility chair.	She's confined/wheelchair bound.
He receives special ed services.	He's in special ed.
She has a developmental delay.	Kids without disabilities.
Kids without disabilities.	Normal or healthy kids.
Communicates with her eyes/devices/etc.	Is non-verbal
Congenital disability	Birth defect
Brain injury	Brain damaged
Accessible parking, hotel room, etc...	Handicapped parking, hotel room, etc...