

Writing Centre

Inclusive Language: Disabilities, Mental Health, and Neurodiversity

Avoid Deficit Framing

Certain language suggests that disabilities, mental health challenges, and neurodiversities are a deficit. For example, John suffers from has epilepsy.

Avoid "Super Hero" Framing

This language suggests that these conditions are barriers to normalcy and/or success and something an individual should overcome. For example, despite her autism, Jane got the job.

Use Person-First Language

This style of writing is respectful and inclusive because it focuses on the person before providing a label. For example, a disabled person with/who has a disability.

Sometimes, person-first language suggests a disability is merely something someone possesses, and diminishes the influence it has on the way they experience the world. If someone self- identifies as an **amputee**, not a **person with an amputation**, referring to them as the latter would not be inclusive language.

When possible, honor an individual's self-identifiers. If you are not sure how someone identifies, use person-first language.

Inappropriate Terms	Appropriate Terms
able-bodied	non-disabled
abnormal / challenged / cripple / deficit	diverse ability, person with a/who's
addict	substance use disorder, person with
afflicted / stricken / suffers from	avoid deficit framing
ailment / illness	use specific condition
bound / confined (to a wheelchair)	wheelchair user
clean	substance-free
conquered / despite / in light of	avoid super hero framing
crazy / mad / lunatic / insane / mental	mental health challenges
	person who has a <i>specific condition</i>
dwarf / midget / little person	short of stature, restricted growth
fits / spells / spastic	seizure
handicap (parking, washroom, etc.)	accessible
hearing impaired	deaf
invalid / retarded	intellectual disability
victim	survivor
visually impaired	blind, legally blind (some vision)

Adapted from SFU Communicators Tool Kit "Inclusive Writing Resources"