

6 Tips for Talking About Disability

- 1 Use the word "disability" and refer to "the disability community."** Both terms are clear and appropriate. Say "nondisabled" instead of "able-bodied" or "normal."
- 2 Avoid euphemisms** like "special needs," "differently-abled," or outdated terms like "the disabled," which suggest separation from the larger community.
- 3 Respect identity preferences.** Some people with disabilities prefer identity-first language (e.g., "autistic person"), while others use person-first language (e.g., "person with autism"). When in doubt, ask.
- 4 Avoid passive or victimizing terms.** Say "he has cerebral palsy," not "he suffers from cerebral palsy." Say "wheelchair user," not "wheelchair-bound."
- 5 Use "accessible" instead of "handicapped"** when describing parking, restrooms, and entrances.
- 6 Choose words and phrases that reflect inclusion rather than separation.** The way we talk about disability shapes attitudes and perceptions.