



## 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	<i>avoid deficit framing</i>
ailment / illness	<i>use specific condition</i>
bound / confined (to a wheelchair)	wheelchair user
clean	substance-free
conquered / despite / in light of	<i>avoid super hero framing</i>
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)