



Definitions & Grammar Tips

able-bodied: The term able-bodied should be avoided and is not accurate to describe a person who does not have a disability. Accessible environments and adaptive equipment allow many individuals with disabilities to be able-bodied. Use the term non-disabled or the phrase does not experience a disability when it is necessary to distinguish that a person does not have a disability. Avoid using the term able-bodied.

accessible, accessibility: Use accessible when describing a space, location or event that is modified to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Accessible modifications allow unrestricted admittance to accommodate individuals who may or may not use a wheelchair as a result of mobility impairments as well as individuals who may have sensory impairments. The term accessibility also includes modifications for individuals who communicate in different languages, have hearing or vision impairments, and other cognitive and learning disabilities.

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act.

autism: Autism is a mental disorder characterized by indicators such as significant language dysfunction, withdrawal from reality, difficulty interacting socially, and repetitive behavior. Use the phrase individual with autism. Avoid the term autistic.

deinstitutionalization: A movement that strives to relocate individuals with disabilities from segregated institutional environments to supportive and inclusive community settings.

disability: A term used to define restriction(s) that complicate an individual's ability to perform activities or have experiences considered to be typical among individuals who do not experience a disability. Such restrictions may be permanent or temporary, and may fluctuate depending upon the disability and the resources available.

Down syndrome: Not Down's syndrome.

inclusion: A term that implies that all individuals with a disability, regardless of their ability, are part of typical classrooms, schools, local and world communities. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its 1997 amendments make it clear that schools have a duty to educate children with disabilities in general education classrooms.

person-first language: person-first language seeks to avoid reducing people to a set of labels. When writing about disability or health-related issues, this effort avoids placing a disability or condition before an individual. We are all people first, no matter what labels we have acquired.

regular education initiative: A term used to describe the movement from segregated learning environments to educational settings that encourage collaborative and inclusive relationships between general and special education programs.

Seeing Eye Dog: A trademark for a guide dog trained by Seeing Eye Inc. of Morristown, N.J. Use personal assistance animal, companion animal, or service animal.

special education: Educational services including instruction, as well as related services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, and speech and language therapy that are designed to ensure students with disabilities receive the supports and services needed to meet educational goals.

wheelchair: Avoid the phrases confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair user. Instead, use phrases such as uses a wheelchair, and other person-first configurations.
