A thoughtful guide for your words and actions.

DISABLE-DISRESPECT.ORG

Your words and actions have power.

For people with disabilities, incorrect perceptions and negative attitudes are often the greatest barriers to overcome. The hurtful words we use in our own conversations, online and in the media have a lot to do with feeding those attitudes.

Through your **words** and **actions**, you can show respect to your neighbors with disabilities. It's your (word) choice.

Your words can hurt or help. Which will you choose?

Having a disability is a significant part of some people's lives. But it isn't the most significant part of their identity. By saying "people with disabilities" or "a person with a disability," you are showing that you value these friends, family members, neighbors and co-workers as people first and foremost.

It's not about being politically correct.
It's about giving every human being respect and value.

What words have you been choosing?

WORDS TO LOSE	WORDS TO LIVE BY
crippled, spastic, gimp	cerebral palsy/paraplegia/ physical disability
retard, mongoloid, special, slow	intellectual disability
dumb/deaf-mute	Deaf, hard of hearing
handicap	disability
fit	epilepsy/seizure
insane, crazy, cray, psycho	psychiatric disability
wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair	uses a wheelchair

WORDS TO LOSE	WORDS TO LIVE BY
stricken, victim, suffering from	had or has a disability
patient	use only if under a doctor's care
handicapped parking/seating	accessible parking/seating
special bus, special housing	separate bus, segregated housing
the disabled, the blind	person with a disability, people who are blind
disabled rights or group	disability rights, disability community
differently abled, handicapable	avoid trendy or cute terms

Let your actions speak for themselves.

There are 54 million Americans with disabilities. Think about these tips when you communicate and interact with people with disabilities who live, work, go to school, play, worship and volunteer in your community.

1. First of all, relax. It's okay to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do. And don't be embarrassed if you use common phrases, such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability.

2. When introduced to a person with a disability, offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb usually can shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.

3. When meeting a person who is blind, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When talking in a group, try to remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.

4. When talking with a person with a disability, use eye contact and speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter.

5. If you offer to help, wait until the offer is accepted. Then, listen or ask for instructions.

6. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.

7. Wheelchairs and other assistive devices are part of the personal body space of the people who use them. Leaning on a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on a person and is generally considered inappropriate.

8. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head.

9. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair, try to place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.

10. To get the attention of a person who is Deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly and slowly to determine if the person can read your lips.

Out of context? Still inappropriate.

Sometimes you just have to vent. The drive-thru forgets your fries. You tweet about a celebrity who annoys you. Or maybe you just made a mistake and are making fun of yourself for it.

But when you use words that disrespect a group of people, you've gone too far. So please, take the time to say what you really mean. And leave the disability community out of it.

From the top news headlines to the latest Twitter hashtag, there are plenty of opportunities for our writing to improve.

"NOTE TO SELF: PUT THE LID ON THE BLENDER BEFORE YOU TURN IT ON #SHORTBUS"

#DisableDisrespect

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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