

Inclusive Language

To fulfill Mason standards of inclusive excellence and serve our diverse community, avoid racist, sexist, ableist, or otherwise biased language. Only reference story subjects' identities when relevant and with consent. See also **disability, access** for more specific guidelines.

Disability

At Mason, we strive for inclusivity, objectivity, and accuracy when writing about people with disabilities and disability in general. Only refer to someone's disability if it is relevant. If you refer to a disability, be as specific and accurate as possible.

When writing about disability use person-first language or identity-first language. Person-first language emphasizes the person rather than or apart from a disability. Identity-first language allows an individual to challenge negative connotations of disability or to claim a disability as part of an identity. Preferences within the disability community vary, so we suggest confirming the preference of anyone you write about. Refer to the [inclusive language guide from Mason's Disability Services](#).

Person-first

- *person with a disability*
- *person who has autism*
- *he uses mobility aids*

Identity-first

- *disabled person*
- *autistic person*
- *mobility aids user*

Access

Use language that instead emphasizes accessibility. For example, use *accessible parking* rather than *handicapped parking*. (e.g., *accessible restrooms, accessible seating*)

Do not conflate people with their disabilities. For example, do not use *the disabled* but rather *people who have disabilities*.

Avoid language that negatively frames disability (*a person confined to a wheelchair* or *a person who is wheelchair bound*) and use neutral language instead (*a person who uses a wheelchair, a wheelchair-user*). Similarly, avoid terms such as *afflicted with, stricken with, suffers from, or victim of* when describing someone with a disability or condition.

Avoid disability euphemisms or language that could be considered condescending, such as *differently abled*, *physically or mentally challenged*, *handi-capable*, or *special needs*.

This entry was adapted from the following guides, and we recommend referring to them for further information and more specific examples.

- [Disability Language Style Guide](#) from the National Center on Disability and Journalism
- [Guidelines for Writing about People with Disabilities](#) from the Americans with Disabilities Act National Network
- [Disability entry](#) in the American Psychological Association's style and grammar guidelines