People With Disabilities

People with disabilities represent about one out of four U.S. adults and 15% of the overall global population. This community is unique in the fact that disabilities can exist at birth or can be acquired or developed later in life. Any person can be impacted on a physical, emotional, behavioral, learning/intellectual or psychological level at any time.

Within the disability community, people with the same disability often hold intersecting views of their disability as well as identities — across race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion and more. Identities can also be shaped by regional, environmental and generational differences, resulting in different perspectives and preferences related to their disability. **All these factors reinforce the common guidance throughout this guide: the most essential guideline is to use language that is preferred by the individual.**

ACCOMMODATION OR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Any change in the working or learning environment or the way things are done that enables a person to enjoy equal opportunity. Reasonable accommodations may be requested based on religion or disability.

ACCESSIBLE, ACCESSIBILITY

Locations, spaces, events, and other collateral are referred to as accessible when they meet criteria for use by disabled and non-disabled people alike.

Accessibility may also include accounting for individuals who communicate in different languages, have hearing or vision impairments, and other cognitive and learning disabilities.

DEAF

Some people with mild or moderate hearing loss may affiliate themselves with the Deaf community and prefer to be referred to as "deaf" instead of "hard of hearing."

Alternatively, some who are deaf and don't have a cultural affiliation to the Deaf community may prefer the term "hard of hearing.

Lowercase when referring to a hearing-loss condition or to a deaf person who prefers lowercase. Capitalize for those who identify as members of the Deaf community or when they capitalize Deaf when describing themselves.

"Deaf" should be used as an adjective, not as a noun; it describes a person with profound or complete hearing loss. Other acceptable phrases include "woman who is deaf" or "boy who is hard of hearing.

DISABLED

As an adjective, disabled may refer to a person or persons whose disability is central to the story being told (a disabled person). Disabled should never be used without people-first language, nor as a noun.

If needing to also reference those without a disability, "nondisabled" is acceptable. Do not use "able-bodied" or "normal."

A disability is generally defined as a condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory, or mobility functions to undertake or perform a task in the same way as a person who does not have that disability.

NEURODIVERGENT

Sometimes abbreviated as ND, means having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of "normal."

Neurodivergent is quite a broad term. Neurodivergence (the state of being neurodivergent) can be largely or entirely genetic and innate, or it can be largely or entirely produced by brain-altering experience or some combination of the two.

Autism and dyslexia are examples of innate forms of neurodivergence, while alterations in brain functioning caused by such things as trauma, long-term meditation practice, or heavy usage of psychedelic drugs are examples of forms of neurodivergence produced through experience

NEURODIVERSE
Neurodiversity is the diversity of human minds, the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.

Neurodiversity is not a trait that any individual possesses. Diversity is a trait possessed by a group, not an individual. When an individual diverges from the dominant societal standards of "normal" neurocognitive functioning, they don't "have neurodiversity," they are neurodivergent.

Person-First Language or Identity-First Language
Person-first language focuses on the person before the objective fact. More recently, a growing number of people within the disability community are using identity-first language. Whenever possible, the best thing to do to empower individuals is to ask them how they would like to be referred to.

Identity-first	Person-first
autistic person	person with autism
blind person	person with blindness
Deaf person	person with deafness