BRAZEN
PRODUCTIONS

Accessible Language Policy

Did you know that many words we use in everyday speech are slurs or ableist towards disabled, neurodiverse, autistic, or Deaf people?

At Brazen, our aim is to ensure we are fully inclusive at every level, and that includes the language we use. Written or spoken, casually or in formal settings, it's all the same: we need to encourage change in ourselves and our peers to ensure positive change to the language we use.

Below are some examples of derogatory language you may come across in everyday life. If you have other terms to add to the list, please send them to us for inclusion.

Learning Disabled	Mental Illness	Physical Disability
Stupid	Mad	Spastic / spaz
Moron	Bonkers	Freak
Retard	Nuts / nutter / nutcase	Tone deaf
Idiot	Wild	Deaf ("Are you deaf?")
Fool	Crazy	Dumb ("That's so dumb")
Thick	Psycho	Mute
Intellectually challenged	Insane	Lame
Mentally challenged	Schizo	Cripple
Simple	Loony / lunatic	Midget
Simpleton	Mental	Blind ("Turn a blind eye to")
Cretin	Disturbed	
Dim witted	Split personality	
Imbecile	Crackers	
Window licker	Demented	
Special	Deranged	
Deficient	Fruitcake	
Mong / mongoloid		
Dumb		

Context is so important when considering whether the language you're using is ableist. Using a factual term to refer to a disability is acceptable – but using it to imply something negative is ableist. For example, asking "Are you blind?" when someone has made a mistake is ableist.

Some people choose to 'own' the terms that are used as ableist slurs against them. For example, a person using walking aids or a wheelchair might call themselves a cripple. If they choose to use this language to self-describe, respect their choice – but that doesn't give you permission to use it to describe them, or anyone else.

How should I refer to someone's disability?

There are many different models of disability language, and individuals have a right to a preference of how they – and their disability – are referred to. So, there's no one-size-fits-all approach.

The key thing here is simple: don't label – ask! It's perfectly acceptable to ask a disabled, neurodiverse, or Deaf person how they prefer to talk about themselves and their disability. Where possible, ask them directly – not their carer, parent, or co-worker. Doing this creates an inclusive environment that we all want to see.

What can I say instead?

Stigma around disability is everywhere in casual language and continuing to use these words not only perpetuates stigma but is also shorthand for writing someone or something off. Think about how often someone referred to as 'nuts' is then not taken seriously by others – because it's easy to apply tropes and clichés to this language and assume that person is not emotionally or intellectually capable.

When you look at the long list of ableist language we encounter every day, it's easy to wonder what we should be using instead. In truth, there is often a straightforward way to refer to a person or situation that doesn't use this troublesome language.

For example, instead of suggesting someone is 'dumb' they may be 'ignorant'. A situation may be 'extreme' instead of 'crazy'.

Language is fluid and terms can change their meaning over time. We all make mistakes and are constantly learning!

The general rule to avoid using ableist language is simply this: if the word related to disability is being used to describe a negative thing, find a different word to use.