



*See the person  
first.*

## A way with words

Language can empower individuals and their families or reinforce limiting stereotypes. Terminology referring to disability has changed over the years.

The currently accepted terminology for the diagnosis is:

*A person with Down syndrome.*

### When writing about Down syndrome:

- Put the person first not the disability (use 'with or 'who has')
- Capital 'D' in Down – John Langdon Down was the physician who first described the characteristics of Down syndrome
- No apostrophe following Down
- Lower case 's' in syndrome

An individual with Down syndrome is not a *Down syndrome*, a *Downsie* or a *Down's child*. By using appropriate terminology, and encouraging others to do the same, you are actively seeing the person first, and as more important than the disability.

Avoid using outdated and degrading terminology such as *mentally retarded* or *disabled*. Today we refer to a person *with an intellectual disability*.

Avoid using negative or patronising terms in reference to Down syndrome:

- People do not *suffer* from Down syndrome. Avoid other terms which imply this e.g. *a victim of* or *afflicted by*.
- People with Down syndrome are not, by definition, *special*, *poor*, *unfortunate* etc. They should be referred to with the same respect we expect people to show everyone.
- People with Down syndrome need our support, not our sympathy.

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