WHY IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?
The way you categorize groups of people (i.e. using the word handicapped instead of disabilities or disabilities instead of abilities) impacts the way you interact with the specific groups of people you are referring to. Language is a very powerful tool that can either (intentionally or unintentionally) foster inclusion or exclusion.

WHAT IS PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE?
Person first language is a common and most often accepted approach by advocates of people with disabilities. Person first language puts the person before his/her disability. Person first language tends to stress the verb “to have” rather than “to be”. It is argued that “have” implies possession while “be” implies identity.

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF PERSON-FRST LANGUAGE?
Our Professor uses a wheelchair. She has a learning disability. I wear glasses. I know a Student who receives accommodations with Student Disability Services.

IS PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE ALWAYS A CORRECT WAY TO DESCRIBE A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY?
Most often, yes. However, it should be noted there are some advocates and people with disabilities who reject person-first language. Some are reclaiming historically offensive labels. Some promote the idea that a disability is a part of individual identity.

HOW DO I DESCRIBE A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY THAT IS ABSOLUTELY INOFFENSIVE?
Use their name.

WHEN SPEAKING TO A PERSON USING A WHEELCHAIR IS IT WRONG FOR ME TO SAY, “YOU AND I WILL WALK DOWN THE HALL.”?
Absolutely not. It is not insensitive to use common expressions such as “I see your point” or “He isn’t listening to me.”

WHAT YOU SAY MATTERS
PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE IMPROVES COMMUNICATION

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DO YOU WANT TO DO MORE?

THE (DIS)ABILITY PROJECT CONTINUES
ONLINE & IN PERSON

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