

Language Toolkit - The Super Special Disability Roadshow

The language we use is important. It influences our understanding of disability and can reinforce stereotypes and attitudes.

Disabled:

What do we mean when we use the term **disabled**?

We use the term 'disabled' and 'disabled people' to refer to anyone who experiences barriers in society. This can include D/deaf people if they identify as disabled as well as others living with impairments and/or medical conditions (physical, sensory, learning, cognitive, mental health, etc) that identify as disabled.

We use the **Social Model of Disability** and recognise that some people experience disabling barriers. The Social Model says that people are disabled by society not their impairment. They are actively being disabled by their environment, people's attitudes or policies and procedures. For example:

- A wheelchair user is disabled by stairs and the lack of a ramp.
- A hard of hearing person is disabled by the lack of a hearing loop
- A Deaf person is disabled by the lack of sign language interpreters to access things like a non-BSL using doctor

TOP TIP - This is why we say 'Disabled People' not 'people with a Disability', as Sal points out in the show.

TOP TIP - not everyone self-identifies as disabled. Only 48% of people who could be defined as disabled think of themselves as disabled.

In the show Rob and Sal talk about the negative attitudes and stigma towards disability and how that can be a factor in why some people do not identify as being disabled. For instance, an older person may acquire an impairment that affects their hearing or mobility but they are unlikely to say they are disabled because they see it as a negative thing.

At BOP we do not see the term disabled as negative because we see that it is something that happens to a person because of the barriers and problems around them. And if we think like that we can look at improving those problems and making the world more accessible for everyone. It is not about 'what is wrong' with someone but rather about what we can do to make things better!



Non-disabled is the opposite or antonym of disabled and soBOP never uses the term 'able-bodied', which is a term that ignores the fact that many disabled people face barriers that do not relate to their bodies. This can include negative attitudes and discrimination.

TOP TIP - Disabled and Non-Disabled are safe words to use because of the Social Model and they demonstrate that you understand how lots of people who identify as disabled think about disability

Barriers:

A barrier is something that a person might come across that affects their ability to use or do something. For instance:

- Steps stopping a wheelchair user
- Small print being hard to read if you are partially sighted
- Lack of clear information confusing you
- A noisy room make it hard to hear and concentrate
- Lack of a hearing loop creating a barrier to people using hearing aids

Barriers can be practical things as listed above but they can also be about how a person is treated. We call these attitudinal barriers.

Access requirements:

An access requirement is something that would help break down a barrier that a disabled person might face. For example: A Deaf person might require a sign language interpreter. Access to a sign language interpreter is an access requirement.

By fulfilling a disabled person's access requirements you are giving them the opportunity to have equality of experience.

TOP TIP - If someone is coming to visit your school you may want to ask them for their access requirements.

Equality:

Equality is treating everybody differently to ensure everyone has the same opportunities or equity of experience. We often hear "I treat everyone the same" and although most people's intention is well meaning this can create barriers for people who have access requirements because things are not being adapted for them or support is not being put in place.

Impairment vs Disability:

The term impairment refers to the effects of a person's medical condition. They can be to do with the body or the brain and it can also be hidden or invisible. An invisible condition (or you might hear hidden disability) refers to a person being disabled but you cannot tell this by looking at them. This could be a mental health condition for instance,

The term disability refers to the difficulties or lack of opportunities faced by a disabled person because of physical, attitudinal or other barriers. It is the result of interactions between a person with an impairment and their social environment.

Therefore a disabled person is a person with an impairment who experiences disability.

TOP TIP - Ask some for their access requirements. If you ask for someone's medical condition or impairment they might give you a long medical name that is no help to you. You want to know how best you can support them and you will find this out by asking for access requirements.

Personal Assistant:

This is a term to describe someone supporting a disabled person. The term personal assistant is better than carer or companion. It is broader and can include a wider range of tasks and activities.

TOP TIP - Don't assume a person with a disabled person is their personal assistant, always ask.

Ableism:

Ableism is discrimination and social prejudice against disabled people. Similar in concept to racism / sexism etc. Ableism characterises disability & disabled people as inferior to non-disabled.

D/deaf:

Some D/deaf people may not identify as disabled. We recognise that three predominant terms are used with regards to deafness – 'Deaf', 'deaf' and 'deafened' - you will also see the use of 'D/deaf'.

To be deaf or deafend (small d) means you have a hearing loss but you do not identify as part of the Deaf Community that uses sign language as their first and preferred language. Generally deaf people use oral communication and may have become deaf later in life and so have grown up in an auditory world of verbal communication. Some deaf people may lipread and may have knowledge of SSE (sign supported English), although this does not make them culturally Deaf.

TOP TIP - When speaking to someone who is lip reading speak at a normal pace. Speaking slowly makes it hard for them to follow your speech pattern.

Deaf – with a capital “D” – is used to refer to people who are culturally Deaf. These people actively use British Sign Language or Scottish Sign Language; they see themselves as being culturally Deaf and part of the Deaf community.

TOP TIP - Have a notepad & pen available at your school's reception desk. This way if someone comes in who uses British Sign Language & you don't sign you can still communicate.

Language today:

People can be worried about using the right language and do not want to offend people. The language around disability used in day to day speech has evolved over the years, moving away from medical terms misused as slang to correct and empowering words. Here are just a few:

Disabled	Non - Disabled	Impairment
Blind	Visually Impaired	Deaf, deaf or D/deaf
Hard of Hearing	Wheelchair User	Mobility Impairment
Neurodiverse	Personal Assistant	Access Requirements
Barrier	Access Audit	Mental Health Condition
Deafblind	Learning Impairment	Small or short person
Autistic	Reasonable Adjustments ¹	Invisible condition

It is important we use the correct appropriate terminology. It provides disabled people with a sense of individual and collective identity.

Access tools in the Super Special Disability Roadshow:

There are three versions of the show each each with a different access tool:

Sign Language Interpretation: There is a person on screen who is interpreting the show's spoken word into British Sign Language.

Audio Description: You can hear an additional voice of the audio describer. They are describing the visual show for who are Blind or Visually Impaired. Like Sal from the show.

Captioning: The words spoken can be seen on the bottom of the screen. They also highlight who is speaking, if it is singing and describe any sound effects that are important to the story.

¹ Reasonable adjustments is a legal term which refers to the steps taken to make things more accessible for disabled people. This is often used in the workplace but school may also talk or think about the reasonable adjustments they are making for a learner.