

IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE

Person-first language:

A way of referring to a disabled person that emphasizes the person before the diagnosis, e.g. "person with autism."

Identity-first language:

A way of referring to a disabled person that emphasizes the disability as an identity, e.g. "autistic person."

Although some disability communities choose to refer to themselves with person-first language (e.g. "person with an intellectual disability.") many in the Autistic community join the majority of the Deaf and Blind communities in our embrace of identity-first language.

This means that the Autistic community prefers to refer to ourselves as "autistic" rather than "having autism."

Autistics choose this language with intention and full knowledge of the thought process behind it.

Many Autistics prefer identity-first language because we don't see our autism as something separate from ourselves. Autism is a part of Autistic individuals, describing the way our brain works, rather than something that has been added to our being.

Person first language is often used to describe something negative — a deficit or disease (for example, person with cancer). Autistic people largely do not view our autism as an affliction and prefer that our language reflect that.

For Autistic people, autism is seen as just like any other identity marker—similar to gender, race, ethnicity, hair color, or any number of other value-neutral characteristics. We are not “people with tallness,” “people with maleness,” “people with Jewishness,” “people with gayness,” or “people with autism.” We are Autistic people.

Autistic people don’t want to be valued as people in spite of our autism; we want to be valued *as Autistic people*.

When attempting to refer to Autistic people with respect, please remember that the most respectful thing you can do is refer to us in the manner in which *we* choose.

RESOURCES:



AUTISM
ACCEPTANCE
MONTH

autisticadvocacy.org

autismacceptancemonth.org