

## Lesson 5 People First Language

**Purpose:** To increase awareness of People First Language.

### **Lesson Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Discuss how the words we use reflect our beliefs and attitudes about disability.
- Create sentences using People First Language.
- Use words to create positive images of people with disabilities.

### **Materials:**

- People First Language Handout (hard copy provided or may be printed from <http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/images/stories/freearticlespdf/pfl9.pdf>)
- People First Language Exercise
- People First Language Exercise Answer Key
- People First Sentences Activity
- People First Sentences Activity Word Sheets (These should be used to create word bags. You will have to make enough word bags to distribute one to each group when the class is separated into groups of four)
- Post-Test Survey

### **Background (10 minutes):**

4. Prepare People First word bags prior to implementation of lesson plan.
5. Distribute People First Language Handout and People First Language Exercise to students.
6. Go over introductory paragraphs on Exercise sheet with students.
7. Have students complete the People First Language Exercise.
8. Go over the correct answers, answering student questions if applicable.

### **Activities (10 minutes):**

5. Have students break up into groups (preferably four students per group).
6. Give each group a People First Sentence Activity word bag.
7. Explain the activity to the students.
8. Give students 5 minutes to create their “People First” sentence.
9. After each group has created their sentence, have a member from each group write their sentence on the board.
10. As a class, go over each sentence making corrections and revisions as necessary.

### **Reflection (5 minutes):**

Have students engage in discussion about the activity.

Sample questions to ask:

11. Was it difficult to create the sentence?
12. Was it easy to separate the words that brought up positive images from the negative ones?
13. Do you think you can practice People First Language when communicating with others?

**Conclusion (5 minutes):**

1. Write the following on the board:  
IMPOSSIBLE = I – M – POSSIBLE  
Explain statement to students. <*Whenever someone tells you something is impossible, remember it is spelled I – M (am) – Possible.*>  
DISABILITY = DISABILITY  
Explain statement to students. <*Remember that whenever you see disability, there is also ability. There is always ABILITY within DISABILITY.*>
2. Have students pick one of the statements and write a short reflective paper (i.e. journal) of what it means to them.
3. Have students complete post-test. **Be sure to have students use their previous ID number.**

**Lesson 5**  
**Additional Resources**

For more information on People First Language, please visit the “Disability is Natural” website at [www.disabilityisnatural.com](http://www.disabilityisnatural.com).

## EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

BY KATHIE SNOW

VISIT [WWW.DISABILITYISNATURAL.COM](http://WWW.DISABILITYISNATURAL.COM) TO SEE THE COMPLETE ARTICLE

SAY:	INSTEAD OF:
People with disabilities.	The handicapped or disabled.
He has a cognitive disability/diagnosis.	He's mentally retarded.
She has autism (or a diagnosis of...).	She's autistic.
He has Down syndrome (or a diagnosis of...)	He's Down's; a mongoloid.
She has a learning disability (diagnosis).	She's learning disabled.
He has a physical disability (diagnosis).	He's a quadriplegic/is crippled.
She's of short stature/she's a little person.	She's a dwarf/midget.
He has a mental health condition/diagnosis.	He's emotionally disturbed/mentally ill.
She uses a wheelchair/mobility chair.	She's confined to/is wheelchair bound.
He receives special ed services.	He's in special ed.
She has a developmental delay.	She's developmentally delayed.
Children without disabilities.	Normal or healthy kids.
Communicates with her eyes/device/etc.	Is non-verbal.
Customer	Client, consumer, recipient, etc.
Congenital disability	Birth defect
Brain injury	Brain damaged
Accessible parking, hotel room, etc.	Handicapped parking, hotel room, etc.
She needs . . . or she uses . . .	She has a problem with . . .
	She has special needs.

**Keep thinking—there are many other descriptors we need to change!**

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Excerpted from Kathie's People First Language article, available at [www.disabilityisnatural.com](http://www.disabilityisnatural.com).

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## People First Language

The words we use when talking to or describing others can be very powerful. Sometimes the negative words we use about disability causes us to see what the person cannot do before we see their abilities. For example, when you say handicapped, you automatically look at that individual's challenges. Instead, say someone with a disability...See the PERSON before the disability. People with disabilities are people like everyone else.

Disability is natural; it does not make a person less valuable to society. When we interact with people with disabilities we should focus on their unique personal characteristics instead of defining who they are based on their disability. Having a disability is not a "problem", it is a natural part of life. The words we use have the power to build positive images about disability.

### People First Language Exercise:

Thinking about the positive and negative words that you learned yesterday, re-create the following sentences so they bring up more positive images of people with disabilities. You may refer to the Examples of People First Language Handout for help.

<b>POSTIVE SENTENCE</b> <i>(Example: Sheila has a disability.)</i>	<b>NEGATIVE SENTENCE</b> <i>(Example: Sheila is handicapped.)</i>
1.	1. John is in the 5 <sup>th</sup> grade and he is crippled.
2.	2. Jane suffers from Cerebral Palsy.
3.	3. Dave is confined to a wheelchair.
4.	4. The disabled girl won 1st place in the Spelling Bee.
5.	5. He is retarded.
6.	6. Katie is brain damaged.
7.	7. Michael's walking is restricted because he uses crutches.
8.	8. The handicapped should be excluded from activities.
9.	9. Amy is a normal kid.
10.	10. George is disabled and unable to do things.

### People First Language Answer Key

The words we use when talking to or describing others can be very powerful. Sometimes the negative words we use about disability causes us to see what the person cannot do before we see their abilities. For example, when you say handicapped, you automatically look at that individual's challenges. Instead, say someone with a disability...See the PERSON before the disability. People with disabilities are people like everyone else.

Disability is natural; it does not make a person less valuable to society. When we interact with people with disabilities we should focus on their unique personal characteristics instead of defining who they are based on their disability. Having a disability is not a "problem", it is a natural part of life. The words we use have the power to build positive images about disability.

#### People First Language Exercise:

Thinking about the positive and negative words that you learned yesterday, re-create the following sentences so they bring up more positive images of people with disabilities. You may refer to the Examples of People First Language Handout for help.

<b>POSTIVE SENTENCE</b> <i>(Example: Sheila has a disability.)</i>	<b>NEGATIVE SENTENCE</b> <i>(Example: Sheila is handicapped.)</i>
1. John is in the 5 <sup>th</sup> grade and he has a disability.	1. John is in the 5 <sup>th</sup> grade and he is crippled.
2. Jane has Cerebral Palsy.	2. Jane suffers from Cerebral Palsy.
3. Dave uses a wheelchair.	3. Dave is confined to a wheelchair.
4. The girl with a disability won 1 <sup>st</sup> place in the Spelling Bee.	4. The disabled girl won 1st place in the Spelling Bee.
5. He has a cognitive disability.	5. He is retarded.
6. Katie has a brain injury.	6. Katie is brain damaged.
7. Michael uses crutches to assist his walking.	7. Michael's walking is restricted because he uses crutches.
8. People with disabilities should be included in activities.	8. The handicapped should be excluded from activities.
9. Amy does not have a disability.	9. Amy is a normal kid.
10. George has a disability and is able to do many things.	10. George is disabled and unable to do things.

## **People First Sentences Activity**

Each of the People First Sentence Activity word sheets is different. The best possible “People First” sentences that students can create are included on this sheet for your reference. There are a total of seven word sheets. You will need to divide students into groups accordingly.

### **To Prepare for Activity:**

1. For each of the People First Sentence Activity word sheets, cut out the word pieces for each group by cutting along the dotted line.
2. Put the word pieces for each group into separate bags (e.g. Ziploc) and label bags with group numbers. For example, all pieces from Group 1 word sheet go into a bag labeled “Group 1”.

### **Remind Students of the following:**

There are no punctuation marks (i.e. commas, periods) so it is their responsibility to put them in.

The sentences they create should NOT use negative words.

They should refer to the “Power of Words” handout they received from the previous lesson for help.

### **Best Possible Sentences:**

**Group 1:** Jackie is a talented student who uses a wheelchair because she has paraplegia.

**Group 2:** Karl has a learning disability which makes reading a challenge for him.

**Group 3:** Corrine assists her friend who has a visual impairment through the dark hallway.

**Group 4:** Stacey has Cerebral Palsy and uses an electronic device to communicate.

**Group 5:** Haylee has a cognitive disability and needs help with daily living skills.

**Group 6:** I know Jake has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder so I accept that he likes to clean things twice.

**Group 7:** Yuki has ADHD which makes it difficult for her to concentrate in class.

### Group 1

**Best Possible Sentence:** Jackie is a talented student who uses a wheelchair because she has paraplegia.

Jackie	is	a	talented	student
who	uses	a	wheelchair	because
she	has	paraplegia	handicapped	confined
is	crippled	restricted	lazy	loser



**Group 2**

**Best Possible Sentence:** Karl has a learning disability which makes reading a challenge for him.

Karl	has	a	learning disability	which
makes	reading	a	challenge	for
him	is	disabled	weakness	impossible
students	ignore	him	reject	learning

**Group 3**

**Best Possible Sentence:** Corrine assists her friend who has a visual impairment through the dark hallway.

Corrine	assists	her	friend	who
has	a	visual	impairment	through
the	dark	hallway	suffers	from
avoids	in	is	unable	to help

**Group 4**

**Best Possible Sentence:** Stacey has Cerebral Palsy and uses an electronic device to communicate.

Stacey	has	Cerebral Palsy	and	uses
an	electronic	device	to	communicate
is	crippled	relies	on	is
restricted	using	is	a	loser

**Group 5**

**Best Possible Sentence:** Haylee has a cognitive disability and needs help with daily living skills.

Haylee	has a	cognitive	disability	and
needs	help	with	daily	living
skills	is	mentally retarded	disabled	is
stupid	she	has	no	friends

**Group 6**

**Best Possible Sentence:** I know Jake has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder so I accept that he likes to clean things twice.

I	know	Jake	has	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
so	I	accept	that	he
likes	to	clean	things	twice
feel	avoid	shame	when	doesn't

**Group 7**

**Best Possible Sentence:** Yuki has ADHD which makes it difficult for her to concentrate in class.

Yuki	has	ADHD	which	makes
it	difficult	for	her	to
concentrate	in	class	impossible	restricts
learning	is	a	weakness	handicap