



Terminology Guide

Because saying the right thing is just as important as doing the right thing

- A person has an intellectual disability, rather than is suffering from, afflicted with, or a victim of mental retardation. It is preferred terminology not to write or say that a person is mentally retarded.
- In schools, do not refer to people with intellectual disabilities as those with special needs.
- A Unified Sports team consists of people with and without intellectual disabilities working together equally.



It is important to know that we do not label types of disabilities among our athletes. It is not appropriate to ask what type of disability an athlete has, but if the situation ever does arise, please consider the following:

- Speak to the person before the disability, “people first”; a person with an intellectual disability, not an intellectually disabled person.
- Down Syndrome has replaced Down’s Syndrome.
- A person has a physical disability rather than crippled.
- Someone has a visual impairment rather than blind.
- A person has a seizure rather than a fit.
- A person has a seizure disorder or epilepsy, rather than is epileptic.

Important Note on “With” Vs “For” Culture in Unified Clubs

Here at Special Olympics it is important that we have a “with” culture instead a “for” culture. What does that mean? We never want general education students to say “I am in the club for the special education students at my school.” We want to hear “I do this club together with friends at my school.”