

Words matter. The following language guidelines have been developed for use by anyone writing or speaking about persons with intellectual disabilities to ensure all people are portrayed with individuality and dignity.

Language Guidelines

- **DO NOT** use the word “**the**” in front of Special Olympics.
- Our name is “**Special Olympics North Carolina**”
 - It is not NC Special Olympics or Special Olympics of North Carolina
 - Similarly, a local program is “**Special Olympics Blank County**”
 - It is not “Blank County Special Olympics” or “Special Olympics of Blank County”
- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as **Special Olympics athletes**, not “Special Olympians” or “Special Olympic athletes”.
 - Special Olympics doesn’t have permission to use the word “Olympian”!
 - Refer to Special Olympics athletes as **athletes**. In no case, should the word appear in quotation marks.
- People First Language
 - **People with intellectual disabilities** not people who are intellectually disabled.
- **A person has intellectual disabilities**, rather than is suffering from, is afflicted with, or is a victim of intellectual disabilities.
 - **A person uses a wheelchair**, rather than is confined or restricted to a wheelchair.
 - **A person has physical challenges** or **has disabilities**, rather than is disabled or crippled.
- Distinguish between adults and children with intellectual disabilities. Use **adults** or **children**, or **older** or **younger athletes**.
 - “**Kids**” **does not apply to Special Olympics athletes as a whole**. Adults are an important part of the Special Olympics movement.