

person-first &

identity-first

language (for autism)

What is person-first language?

Person-first language is what many special educators and psychologists have been taught to use. It's when you always say "person with autism" instead of "autistic" in an effort to emphasize that the individual is not defined entirely by their diagnosis.

What is identity-first language?

Identity-first language is what many autism self-advocates prefer. This is when you intentionally use the word "autistic" in an effort to affirm that being on the spectrum is a positive part of one's identity. Some folks feel that person-first language suggests that autism is something to be ashamed of.

What language should you use?

If you are on the autism spectrum, you get to decide! If you aren't on the spectrum, you should ask the people you know how they prefer for you to refer to them. And when you aren't interacting with anyone who has an ASD diagnosis, you should use both types of language interchangeably.

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