



IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY

Autistic Language and Imagery: Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T	WHY?
Do say 'Autistic' and 'Autism'.	Don't say 'has Autism' or 'suffers from Autism' or 'ASD' or 'on the spectrum' or 'disorder'.	When we say 'Autistic' we speak to a person's identity. When we say 'has Autism' or terms that refer to a disorder, we can medicalise and dehumanise a person.
Do say 'non speaking' if referring to a person who doesn't communicate with speech.	Don't say 'non verbal' if referring to a person who doesn't communicate by speech.	Language is communicated via more than just speech.
Do say 'difference' if speaking about how an Autistic person's way of being might differ to a neurotypical (e.g. communication difference).	Don't say 'deficit' or 'difficulty' or 'challenge' or 'impairments' if speaking about a person's way of being.	The Autistic person themselves is not impaired, difficult or a challenge. Society and environment creates challenges and difficulties (e.g. She is challenged by an inaccessible school environment).
Do speak neutrally about Autism.	Don't use <u>tragedy language</u> (e.g. 'in spite of his Autism' or 'those poor parents') or <u>superhero language</u> , (e.g. 'special', 'super power', 'different ability').	Generally, we speak neutrally about non-Autistic people. Speaking about Autistic people in a way that suggests tragedy or heroism can be interpreted as patronising and excluding.
Do use imagery that is neutral, rather than emotive.	For example the image of a jigsaw, overuse of the colour blue or ribbon imagery.	This imagery often suggests that Autistic people are 'missing a piece' or that Autism needs to be 'cured'.

We acknowledge that there may be different views on language within the Autistic community and we respect that not all Autistic people will want to use the same language.

For more information, check out our [Talking About Autism: A Language Guide](#)

