

There are a lot of different terms related to neurodiversity. This resource guide defines some key terms and provides some useful tips and resources about autistic culture.

Key Terms to Know

Neurodiversity refers to natural differences in the brain that can lead people to experience and interact with the world in a variety of ways. These differences are not considered “right” or “wrong.”

Example use: “Our workplace values neurodiversity and works to accommodate and support all employees.”

Neurotypical people generally behave and process information in ways that are considered standard or typical.

Example use: “John’s communication skills and social interactions are typical for his age; these qualities are often associated with neurotypical people.”

Neurodivergent people see and understand the world around them differently than neurotypical people. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are two examples of diagnoses that are considered to be neurodivergent.

Example use: “Neurodivergent students often have unique views and strengths that can help create classrooms that are diverse and open to everyone.”

Self-identification may occur when people identify themselves as being neurodivergent without having a formal diagnosis. This may occur when a person has difficulty getting an appropriate assessment, or if a person does not want a formal assessment.

Example use: “Molly, who self-identifies as having autism, joined an online group for people who identify as neurodivergent.”

Language Preferences

For a long time, people were encouraged to use **person first** language when discussing people with disabilities. This movement focused on person’s disability being just one part of their identity.

Person with autism

Autistic person

Many people with disabilities prefer **identity-first** language because they feel their disability is an important part of their identity.

Each person and family may have a different preference about the language they use to describe their disability. Identity-first and person first language are often both used in order to respect both preferences. The best way to determine a person’s language preference is to ask them! It is also acceptable to ask a caregiver if a person is unable to communicate their preference due to complex communication needs.

Additional resource guides and a full list of references at <https://www.delawareautismnetwork.org/>.

Vertucci, K., Slavin, L., Mallory, S., Fletcher, A., & DNEA CDS Team. (2023). *DNEA resource guide: What is neurodiversity?* Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism.



DNEA

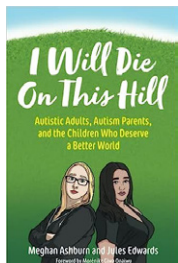
**Delaware Network for
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Resources

Books



[*I Will Die on This Hill*](#) by Meghan Ashburn and Jules Edwards

[*Loud Hands: Autistic People, Speaking*](#) by Julia Bascom

[*Sincerely, Your Autistic Child: What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity*](#) by Autistic Women and

Nonbinary Network

[*Uniquely Human: Updated and Expanded: A Different Way of Seeing Autism*](#) by Barry Prizant

[*We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism Conversation*](#) by Eric Garcia

[*What I Mean When I Say I'm Autistic: Unpuzzling a Life on the Autism Spectrum*](#) by Annie Kotowicz



Online

Autistic Self Advocacy Network at autisticadvocacy.org

Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health (AIR-P) at airpnetwork.ucla.edu/

Autism Intervention Research Network on Behavioral Health (AIR-B) at www.airbnetwork.org

Research

den Houting, J. (2019). Neurodiversity: An insider's perspective. *Autism*, 23(2), 271–273. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361318820762>

Leadbitter, K., Buckle, K. L., Ellis, C., & Dekker, M. (2021). Autistic self-advocacy and the neurodiversity movement: Implications for autism early intervention research and practice. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.635690>

Stenning, A., & Rosqvist, H. B. (2021). Neurodiversity studies: Mapping out possibilities of a new critical paradigm. *Disability & Society*, 36(9), 1532–1537. [10.1080/09687599.2021.1919503](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.1919503)

Tips

- **Partner with autistic people!**
When working on a project that involves autism, get input from autistic people – ask them what they think about your ideas.
- **Respect language differences!**
Ask someone if they prefer person or identity-first language and do your best and use their preference of a *person with autism* and/or an *autistic person*.
- **Learn more about autistic culture!**
Read articles, books, or personal stories written by autistic people. Engage with autistic communities through online forums and social media. Attend workshops and training that feature autistic speakers.
- **Use a person-centered approach!**
Focus on improving quality of life rather than trying to make a person look “less autistic” or forcing them to behave in a standard or typical way.

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