

Person-First Language versus identity-based language (“Autistic”): While person first language (i.e. “a student with autism” or “my friend with autism” ensures that we are recognizing a person with autism as a person first, many autistic individuals emphasize the fact that autism is an important part of who they are. Autistic individuals can feel that autism is a part of “who they are and who they will always be. If you took away their autism, they would not be the same person. There is no separating the person from their autism”

(<https://autismmythbusters.com/general-public/autistic-vs-people-with-autism/>). As such, it is important to talk to the people in your life who have disclosed to you their diagnosis of autism to learn about their individual language preferences. (Similarly, it is important to maintain the confidentiality associated with a diagnosis.) Because different people with autism have different preferences around using person-first language versus using the label “autistic,” you will find that that within this website, and when I speak to groups of people, I alternate between using terms such as “autistic person/student” with “person/student/child with autism.” Similarly, I have done so throughout this document as well.

Many autistic individuals prefer to use the term autism, or to say they are on “the spectrum” rather than referring to their autism as a disorder. For this reason it can be preferable to say “autism” rather than “Autism Spectrum Disorder.” This said you may still see or hear the terms “Autism Spectrum Disorder” or “ASD” in literature because this is still the medical diagnostic label.