

# Words matter: Disability

The words we use can open doors to understanding, respect, dignity and support for people to lead the lives they want. Words can also create barriers, stigma or stereotypes that are demeaning and rob people of their individuality.

Here are some positive Tongan words or phrases to use to describe disabilities or people with a disability.

Disability (general)	
Kakai faingata'a'ia-faingata'a'ia fakaesino, faingata'a'ia fakae'atamai, faingata'a'ia fakaeongo hangee koe mole 'ene vakai pe fanongo	People with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, sensory disabilities, for example loss of vision or hearing.
Blind/vision impairment	
Po'uli (or more politely speaking - 'oku po'uli hono fofonga)	Literally meaning their eyes or their vision has been darkened as in night. There is no degree here in terms of level of visual impairment. This is usually just for totally blind people.  <i>Other derivatives:</i> 'Oku po'uli hono vakai (polite) 'Oku mole 'ene vakai (polite) Kui (blind)
Deaf/hearing impairment	
Tuli/mole 'ene fanongo	Deaf/loss of hearing.
Wheelchair user	
'Alu 'alu saliate/'alu saliate	Literally, translates to someone who goes or moves about in a chariot or wheeled chair. Common vernacular in Tongan communities and describes the action or activity associated with the disabled person.
Tokotaha 'oku ne ngaue 'aki e saliate	Literally, a person that uses a chariot or wheeled chair.
Heka saliate takai	Literally, a person who 'rides' about in a chariot.

## Avoid negative words

Here are some examples of negative Tongan words or phrases which should not be used to describe disabilities or people with a disability.

'Oku po'uli hono mata	Impolite way to describe blindness.
'Mata 'ipo, mata kui	Blind (very impolite and rude).
Heke	Lame, paralysed (descriptive reference that can also be derogatory).
Polio	Lame, paralysed (very impolite and rude).
Telinga supo	Hearing impaired (very impolite and rude).
Telinga nana	Hearing impaired (very impolite and rude).



 [www.leva.co.nz](http://www.leva.co.nz)

 [www.facebook.com/levapasifika](https://www.facebook.com/levapasifika)

 [@levapasifika](https://twitter.com/levapasifika)

LeVa

