

Adoption Language Guide

Language is a powerful tool and shapes the way we view our world. Adoption Network Cleveland hopes you will use the power of language to carve a positive niche in our world of adoption and to promote good self-esteem for the one in every eight Americans it affects.

Try ...

Instead of ...

Birthparent or first parent

Real parent, natural parent

Parent, adoptive parent (when specification is necessary)

Foster parent (when parent is actually adoptive parent)

Adoptive parent (when specification is unnecessary)

Adoptee, adult adoptee, adopted person

Adopted child (when referring to an adult adoptee)

Unwanted child, given away by birthparents

Biological child (in adoptive family), birthchild, born to us

Our own child, our real child, our natural child

Child who joined his/her family through adoption

Chosen child, adopted child (when specification is unnecessary)

Child born to parents who were not married

Illegitimate child

Child with special needs

Special needs child

Child waiting for adoptive homes/parents

Waiting child

Child legally free for adoption

Difficult/hard to place child

Adoption triad or constellation (birthparents, adoptee, adoptive parents, extended families, professionals)

Adoption triangle (often implies conflict)

Placed his/her child for adoption

Adopted out, didn't want his/her child

Terminated parental rights, relinquished

Put up for adoption, gave child away

Surrendered, made an adoption plan

Child was taken away

Choose to parent (birthparents)

Changed his/her mind, lied (birthparents)

Search, reunion, make contact

Track down, showed up on doorstep

Aged out of foster care

Was a ward of the state

Foster care alumni

Child, child in foster care (when specification is necessary)

Foster child

