

Dirty Words
**Vocabulary Considerations When Communicating
to Older Adult Audiences**

Preferred Synonyms

- It is best to use a neutral & flexible general term to describe those in later life, such as “older” (people, adults, individuals, Americans, etc.)
- Age-specific references (such as “those over 50”; people 65 and up”; etc.)
- Elder/elders (not “elderly”)
- Middle-age
- Midlife
- Boomer (but not “Baby Boomer”)
- Mature

Disliked Terms

- Baby boomers
- Elderly (unless used as an adjective)
- Senior citizen(s)
- Feisty
- Spry
- Sweet
- Little
- Feeble
- Eccentric
- Senile
- Grandmotherly
- Still (as a modifier: still driving; still jogging; etc.)

“Replacement” Words for Senior Housing

<u>“Dirty” Words</u>		<u>Better Alternatives</u>
Facility	⇒	community, campus, neighborhood, establishment
Unit	⇒	home, residence, apartment home
Bed	⇒	accommodations, residence
Aged/Elderly	⇒	people, individuals, those aged 62 or better
Patient	⇒	resident, person, individual, member
Semi-private	⇒	shared accommodation
Alzheimer’s unit	⇒	memory support area, memory care

“Dirty” Words

Better Alternatives

Dining room	⇒	restaurant, café, bistro
Tray service	⇒	take-out, home delivery service
Arts & crafts room	⇒	art studio, artists’ workshop, creative arts center
Activities	⇒	recreation, cultural arts, events, hobbies, art, education
Fitness center	⇒	health club, gym
Bus	⇒	transportation service, coach, shuttle, chauffeur service
Beauty shop	⇒	hair salon
Gift shop	⇒	market, store, boutique, emporium
Environment	⇒	atmosphere, ambience
Appointment	⇒	presentation, tour, visit, meeting
Care	⇒	service, amenity, attention, personal services
Admission	⇒	move-in
Discharge	⇒	move-out, change residences, leave, go home, depart
Nursing home	⇒	health care center, skilled nursing