

Helpful Hints for Effective Communication

The most effective strategy of communicating is to be sensitive, flexible and honest. Talking about disability is often difficult, partly because appropriate terminology is unclear and often laden with negative connotations. Always put the person first – e.g. Person with a disability'. Remember treat all people in the same way you would wish to be treated yourself.

Correct Terminology

Say	Don't say
Person with a disability.	Victim, suffers from, deformed.
Person with cerebral palsy or vision impairment etc.	Afflicted by/with, or blind/can't see.
Person with a physical disability.	Crippled, the crippled, crippling, Invalid uses Wheelchair, Incapacitated, Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair.
Person who is Deaf or Person with a hearing impairment.	Deaf and dumb, deaf mute, mute.
Accessible parking, accessible toilets.	Disabled toilets, handicapped parking, etc.

Remember that people with disabilities are as diverse as others. They may have terminology preferences that should be respected.

Do	Don't
Look at the individual when addressing him or her.	Tell an individual you admire his/her courage or determination.
Ask an individual about the best way to communicate if you are unsure.	Stare at or avoid looking at a visible disability.
Speak directly to a person with a disability, even if he or she is accompanied by a person without a disability.	Express sympathy for the individual.
Offer assistance if it appears necessary, but don't assume he or she will accept it.	Presume the individual is more fragile or sensitive than others.
Extend your hand to shake when meeting someone, even someone with a physical disability.	Assume someone with a speech or hearing impediment is intellectually impaired.
If you offer assistance, wait for acceptance and instructions before proceeding. Remember that not everyone will want or need assistance, and their wishes should be respected.	Feel uncomfortable using the word "see" when addressing a blind person, or "hear" when addressing a hearing impaired person.

Communication Tips