

The A-Z of interacting with people with disability



- A = ASK** before you help (unless it is an emergency); it may not always be wanted
- B = BE** patient and do not pretend to understand or interrupt someone with a speech impediment
- C = COMMUNICATE** naturally with your language and expression. Do not shout or raise your voice unless asked to do so
- D = DIRECT:** consider distance, weather and obstacles, for example steps, heavy doors, uneven ground
- E = EYE LEVEL** during longer conversations. Sit or kneel to be at eye level especially if a person uses a wheelchair
- F = FOCUS** on the person, not the disability. Do not bring the disability up unless relevant
- G = GESTURES** like patting a head or shoulder, and back slapping may be considered patronising
- H = HEARING AIDS:** Reduce unnecessary background noise that may make communication difficult
- I = INDEPENDENCE:** Always respect a person's dignity, individuality and desire for INDEPENDENCE
- J = JOIN** in the conversation and talk as you would with anyone else
- K = KNOW** that most people with a disability can make their own decision
- L = LEAVE** accessible parking spots for people with a disability

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Stereotypes can lead to discrimination as they take away a person's individuality.



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Don't assume you understand how a person feels about having a disability. Even if you know someone with a similar condition, this person may not think or feel the same way.



- M = MAKING ASSUMPTIONS:** Respond to an individual's needs rather than making assumptions about their abilities
- N = NON-VERBAL:** Do not presume that a person who is non-verbal does not understand what you are saying. They may require the assistance of a communication aid
- O = OUTDATED:** Avoid outdated terms like 'handicapped', 'crippled', 'wheelchair bound'
- P = PATTING:** Do not pat an assistance or guide dog if they are in working mode with their owner
- Q = QUALITY** of life is the aim for everyone. Access to the physical environment, information and services is a human right
- R = REARRANGE** furniture to create clear path for wheelchairs, frames, crutches, walking sticks. Unlock accessible doors and make sure there is an 'accessible path of travel'
- S = SPEAK** directly to the person with the disability and not to their companion
- T = TRANSPORT:** Offer a seat to people with limited mobility on public transport
- U = UNFAMILIAR:** How to act toward people with disability sometimes causes confusion especially when it is unfamiliar. Above all be respectful, polite and considerate, offer assistance if needed, communicate effectively and do not hesitate to ask questions
- V = VARIETY:** Everyone uses a variety of ways to communicate and move around in the world. Consider the physical and communication need in each environment
- W = WHEELCHAIR:** Only push or lean on a wheelchair with permission. Moving a wheelchair without the permission of the person in it is disrespectful. It is personal property. View a wheelchair as freedom to move independently
- X = X-FACTOR:** See individuals X-FACTOR and not their limitations
- Y = YARN:** Be patient when communicating with people with cognitive impairment. Speak directly to the person. Do not be afraid to ask the person to repeat something if you do not understand
- Z = ZEST for life.** Quite simply, people with disability do not want their disability to become the defining aspect of their life



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Accessibility means access for all.

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Positive portrayal of people with a disability involves presenting them as individuals with a variety of qualities.