

Working with People with Disabilities



A Basic Guide
to Terminology
and Etiquette



a basic guide

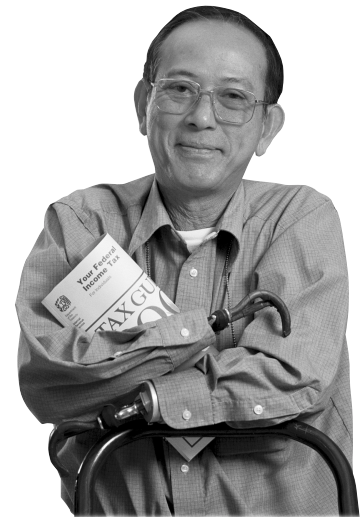
Goodwill Industries is committed to helping people with disabilities find work and succeed on the job.

Goodwill career services such as computer training, interview and resume writing classes, job coaching and assistive technology make it easier than ever before for people with disabilities to enter the workforce.

At the same time, Goodwill builds relationships with employers in the community to help meet their staffing needs with Goodwill graduates. Then, Goodwill follows up with businesses and new employees to ensure workplace success.



to
terminology
& etiquette



Thanks to Goodwill Industries, more and more people with disabilities are working. They're your colleagues, your employees and your supervisors. To help with your general understanding and your day-to-day interactions, we've compiled basic guidelines on speaking and writing about disabilities, helpful etiquette on relating to people with disabilities, and general information on people with disabilities in the workplace.

When speaking and writing about people with disabilities, use language that reflects that people with disabilities are people first, or “people-first language.” They are not defined by their disabilities. In many cases, it may not even be relevant to state the person’s disability.

Here are some examples:

- people with disabilities or people who have disabilities — avoid “the disabled,” “disabled people” and “the handicapped”
- person with paraplegia or person who has paraplegia — avoid “paraplegic” as a noun or adjective



- person with a mental disability or person who has a mental disability — avoid “retarded,” “learning disabled,” “insane”
- person with diabetes or person who has diabetes — avoid “diabetic,” “diabetic person”
- person with a hearing impairment or disability, the Deaf, person who is hard of hearing — Because there are various types of hearing loss and methods of communication, the way that people identify their hearing disabilities is personal. Generally, a person who is deaf is unable to use his or her hearing in communication. A person who is hard of hearing has hearing loss but still relies on hearing and speech to communicate. The Deaf is the only exception to the

speaking & writing...

people-first rule. A Deaf person identifies with the Deaf community who share a common language (sign language) and culture.

As you apply the people-first rule, be sensitive to the words you choose as well as the approach you take in speaking or writing about people with disabilities. Many commonly used words and phrases will need to be replaced with people-first language.

Some examples:

- A person *uses* a wheelchair as a tool for mobility. Avoid phrases such as “wheelchair-bound” or “confined to a wheelchair,” which imply restriction.

- A person *has* a disability, an illness or disorder. Avoid using phrases such as “afflicted by,” “stricken with,” “victim of” or “suffers from.”
- Avoid portraying people with disabilities as superhuman. People with disabilities, as all people, work to be successful and productive in their lives. Avoid using words such as “courageous” and phrases such as “overcame his/her disability” or “despite his/her disability.” People with disabilities do not want to be, nor should they be, measured against a separate set of expectations.
- Avoid using trendy euphemisms to describe people with disabilities. Expressions such as “differently abled,” “physically challenged,” “special” and “handi-capable” generally are regarded as patronizing and inaccurate.
- Person without a disability is the correct way to refer to people without disabilities. Avoid using “normal,” “able-bodied” or “healthy” to describe people without disabilities as these words imply a person with a disability isn’t normal.

...about people
with disabilities



The most important guideline in relating to someone with a disability is one with which we are already familiar: treat others as you would like to be treated. And don't be afraid to make mistakes.

Here are some examples:

- **Avoid making assumptions** or generalizations. People with disabilities are not all alike. They have a wide variety of skills and personalities as we all do. Be careful not to assume that a person with one disability also has others.
- Some people may have **disabilities that are nonvisible** such as respiratory disorders, epilepsy, emotional disorders and learning disabilities. Broaden your understanding of these kinds of disabilities and be sensitive to those workers who reveal their disabilities to you.
- **Don't be afraid to offer assistance** but don't assume that it is needed. Be sure to follow his or her instructions to avoid injury to the person or yourself. Don't be offended or hurt if the person declines assistance.



- **A guide dog or a service dog** is usually working. Do not touch the animal or the person without first asking permission. Resist the temptation to offer treats to the service dog.
- When talking with a person with a disability, **maintain eye contact and speak directly to the person** rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter.
- When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to **offer to shake hands**. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands or shake with their left hand.
- When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always **identify yourself** and others who may be with you. If you offer to assist the person in walking and he or she accepts, let the person take your arm as you walk forward.

- During a conversation with a person who has a speech impairment, **be patient and give him or her time to speak**. Don't try to finish a sentence for the person or speak for him or her. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulties doing so.
- When talking with a person with a developmental disability, **use simple, clear sentences**. Talk as you would with any adult and avoid childish language. Be patient if he or she needs time to respond. If the person doesn't respond, try rewording your sentence.
- When having a conversation with a person who uses a wheelchair, **avoid leaning or hanging onto his or her wheelchair**. Consider the wheelchair as part of the individual's personal space. If a conversation lasts more than a few minutes, try to sit down to be at eye level with the person using the wheelchair.
- **To begin a conversation with a person who is deaf**, gently tap the person's arm or wave your hands. Look directly at the person and speak clearly and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. If the person reads lips, be sure to keep hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth when speaking.
- **Be sensitive** to the person's feelings but don't hesitate to use everyday expressions. It is fine to say "See you later" to a visually impaired person, or "Let's take a walk" to a person using a wheelchair.

Myths and Facts About Employees With Disabilities

Myth: People with disabilities have a higher absentee rate than other employees and cannot be trained to perform a job as well as an employee without a disability.

Fact: A 30-year Dupont study indicates that employees with disabilities have above-average records in job performance, dependability, attendance and safety.

Myth: Hiring employees with disabilities increases workers compensation insurance rates.

Fact: Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the operation and the organization's accident experience, not on whether workers have disabilities.

Myth: Considerable expense is necessary to accommodate workers with disabilities.

Fact: Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than many employers believe. Seventy-one percent of job accommodations suggested by the Job Accommodation Network cost less than \$500.

etiquette

For more Information

U.S. Department of Labor Office
of Disability Employment Policy
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/>

Your Local Goodwill Industries
To find the Goodwill nearest you, use
the searchable locator available on
our web site at *www.goodwill.org*
or call (800) 664-6577 and enter
your five-digit ZIP code.



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