



Disability and Inclusion in the Workplace Handbook

Would you like to learn more about disability and disability etiquette?

This handbook compilation serves to:

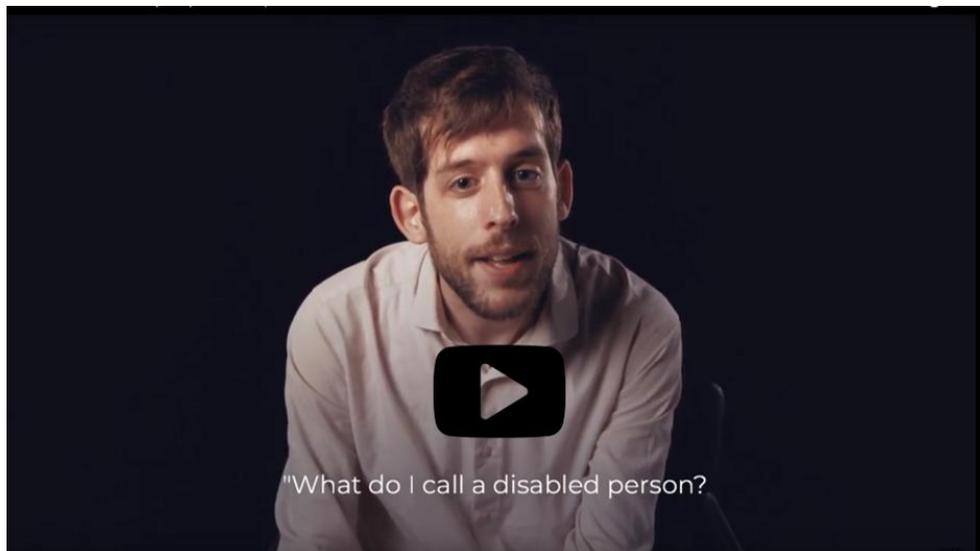
- Raise awareness around “disability”
- Assist us, all, in creating an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities

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I. Understanding Disability

“Disability” is a general term, which includes impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Disabilities may be visible (e.g. a person who uses a wheelchair) or invisible (a person who is hard of hearing). Disability is a complex phenomenon, encompassing the interaction between personal characteristics and features of the society in which the person carries out their day-to-day activities.



[Watch ILO's video "Invalid Opinions"](#)

Overcoming the challenges that people with disabilities can encounter may require interventions – of various degrees – to reduce or eliminate environmental as well as social barriers.

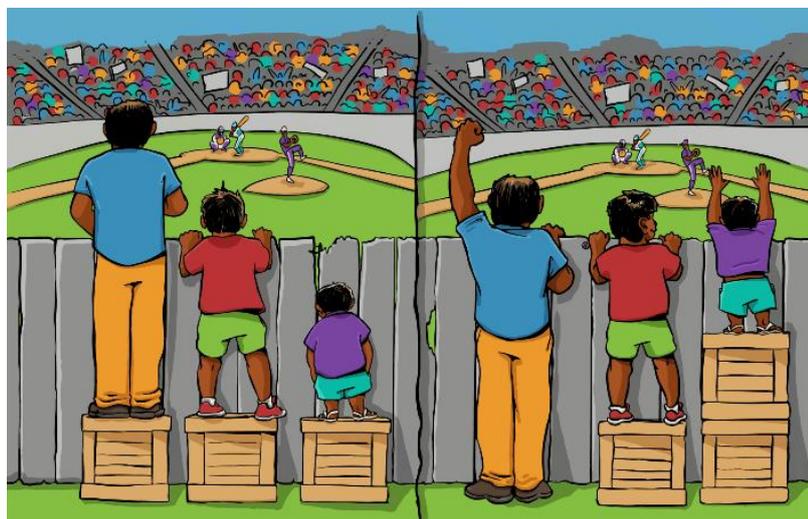
Two distinct approaches to disability, the Medical Model and the Social Model, deserve a closer look. The Medical Model approach tends to focus on the person's impairment and their limitation(s), leading to a "difference" or inequality vis-à-vis the mainstream society. In the Social Model, disability is the consequence of the interaction of the individual with an environment that does not accommodate that individual's differences.

Medical Model	vs	Social Model
 The person is disabled by the abnormalities and deficits of their own body and/or brain.		 The person is disabled by their environment and its physical, attitudinal, communication, and social barriers.
 Disabled people are broken, abnormal, or damaged versions of human being and should be fixed, cured, and/or prevented.		 Disabled people are normal, valid varieties of human being and should have equal rights and access to society, just as they are.
 Since the disabled person's impairments prevent them from functioning normally, they need caregivers and professionals to make decisions for them. The disabled person is an object of charity and receiver of help.		 Since the disabled person is inherently equal, they have a right to autonomy, choice, and free and informed consent in their own lives.

(Image: <https://erinhuman.com>)

Adjustments

Adjustments or “reasonable accommodations” in the workplace means to modify or enhance the working environment or the manner in which a job is carried out, so as to enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform to their full potential. The result is a more inclusive working environment for the individual concerned. The extent of “reasonable” accommodation varies according to a number of factors, including the severity of the individual disability and the corresponding cost or extent of the accommodation.



Inclusive terminology

When speaking to or about someone with a disability it is important to use appropriate and respectful wording:

- **Put “person” first**, i.e. **“person with a disability”**. However, be aware that some persons with disabilities may prefer the term “disabled” or “wheelchair-user” instead of “person who uses a wheelchair”.
- Avoid group designations such as “the deaf” or “the blind”.
- Many persons with disabilities dislike euphemistic terms, such as “physically challenged” and “differently abled.”
- **It's okay to use idiomatic expressions**, such as **“See you later”** to a person who is blind. Persons with disabilities themselves use such expressions.
- **Do not imply disease** when discussing disabilities that result from a prior disease episode. Reference to disease associated with a disability is acceptable only with an acknowledged chronic disease, such as Parkinson's.

Appropriate wording	Inappropriate wording
Person with a disability	Handicapped person
Person with an intellectual or developmental disability	Retarded person
Person who is blind, person with visual impairment	Blind person
Person who is deaf	Deaf person
Person with mental health issues or psychiatric disability	Crazy person

II. Behavioural practices / Etiquette

Overview

- A person with a disability is a first and foremost a person; they are like and unlike anyone else. General good manners and courtesy should be applied as with any other person.
- Avoid excessive praise when persons with disabilities accomplish normal tasks.
- Asking personal questions or questions about someone's disability should be avoided. Inquiries should be limited to information necessary to provide accommodations.
- Persons with disabilities, like all people, are experts on themselves.
- If the person is accompanied by a personal assistant or a sign language interpreter, ensure that you direct your communication to the individual with a disability and not to the companion / interpreter.
- When offering assistance, wait until the offer is accepted or rejected. If accepted, listen to the person and ask for instructions. If rejected, do not feel insulted or offended; it just means the individual does not need assistance.
- Respect all assistive devices, such as canes, wheelchairs, crutches, service dogs, etc. as personal property. Unless given specific and explicit permission, do not move, play with, or use them.
- **Relax. Anyone can make mistakes. If you do so unintentionally, offer an apology.**
- **Keep a sense of humor. If you are unsure, just ask 😊**



[Watch ILO's video on the topic](#)

Persons with reduced mobility or physical disabilities

- Not all people who use wheelchairs are paralysed or unable to walk.
- There is no one "correct" way to use assistive devices. Criticizing usage or making derogatory comments about someone's assistive devices is inappropriate.
- Individuals who use mobility aids, such as canes or wheelchairs, have various limitations and may be required to use a mobility aid on a regular basis, or less frequently as needed.
- When introduced to a person with disabilities, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. Persons with an artificial limb usually shake hands.
- People who appear to be mobile may require accommodations such as accessible parking, because they are unable to walk long distances due to a medical impairment, for example persons with asthma.

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Not all deaf or hard of hearing people can lip-read.
- Relatively few people are completely deaf. Persons who have limited hearing may not be able to make full use of the hearing they have.
- Because persons who are deaf experience sounds differently, some may make sounds noticeable to you, such as audible breathing.
- If a person is reading your lips, ensure that your mouth is visible. When possible, speak in a well-lit room free from background noise.
- Speak using a normal tone of voice unless asked to raise your voice.
- If you are not understood, rephrase, instead of repeating the same words.
- Get the attention of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing before you start speaking by a gesture such as waving your hand.
- Ask the person which method of communication is preferred for job training or complex work-related situations.

Persons who are blind or have low vision



- A person may have a visual disability that is not obvious to others.
- People who are blind know how to orient themselves, in private and public spaces. They are often competent to travel unassisted, though they may use a cane or a guide dog.
- Not all persons with visual impairment know how to read Braille.
- People who are blind do not inherently compensate with other acute senses, such as exceptional hearing, sense of smell or touch, though they may improve the functionality of the other senses through their daily activities.
- When you are leaving the room, inform the person.
- Offer to read written information - such as a menu or a door sign, or to count change.
- Mainly for supervisors: offer the person a tour of the facilities in the workplace if they are newcomers, especially if changes have been carried out on site.

Persons with language or speech impairment

- Be patient. Avoid the temptation to complete words or phrases for the individual.
- Concentrate on the content of the conversation not the delivery.
- The person may prefer to communicate in written form.

- Do not be afraid to say you do not understand. Ask the person to repeat and then listen carefully; repeat what you heard to verify.
- Be attentive in your mannerisms by maintaining eye contact.
- Consider the use of instant messaging in addition to email.
- Relax and communicate as you would normally.

Persons with developmental disabilities

Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. These conditions may impact day-to-day functioning, usually last throughout a person's lifetime and include the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); intellectual disabilities as well as learning disabilities.

- Do not assume that because someone has a cognitive impairment, such as a learning disability, that he or she has below-average intelligence. The individual may in fact have above-average intelligence, but has difficulty in receiving, expressing, or processing information.
- Ask the person if he or she prefers verbal, written, or hands-on instruction, or a combination of methods.
- Speak directly to the individual and make sure you have their attention.
- Ask the individual you are speaking to if they have any questions.
- Treat the individual as an adult; speak directly to the individual, rather than to their companion. Use words and phrases at the appropriate level or complexity for the person.
- Be patient. Allow the individual time to think and answer questions independently.

Autism Spectrum

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental condition characterized by deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts. ASD can cause challenges with cognitive thought, feeling, language and the ability to relate to others. The scale of autism and the severity of symptoms vary tremendously between individuals.

- Review with the individual any applicable workplace "code of conduct"; provide concrete examples to explain unacceptable behaviour and consequences.
- If preferred by the person, provide written job instructions via email.
- Develop clear expectations of responsibilities and the consequences of not meeting performance standards.
- If necessary, schedule regular meetings with the person to set goals and review progress; establish short and/or longer-term objectives.
- Avoid providing too much information at once.
- Do not conclude that lack of eye contact is a choice – it may be the result of a neurological variation.
- If the person's contribution appears lengthy or becomes more than required, do not penalise them. Rather, be prepared to respectfully, yet directly, interrupt by saying something like: "Thank you (name), this amount of information is fully sufficient. Let us move to a new topic now".
- Focus on the content of the person's responses, for example by taking notes, and avoid focusing on voice tone or errors.

Annex 1: Short Quiz

1. While at Restaurant 3, you see a person who uses a wheelchair reaching for a juice on a shelf that seems to be out of their reach. You:

- a. Grab the item and give it to the person
- b. Ask the person if they need help

2. You have noticed that the student working in your office, who is a person with low vision, has to approach very close to their screen to be able to read their emails. Therefore, you presume the person may need a bigger screen. You:

- a. Order a bigger screen for the person
- b. Ask the person if the IT equipment they currently use is satisfactory

3. You are queuing at the WC and do not see anyone with a visible disability around you. The only free restroom is the accessible one.

- a. You go ahead and use it
- b. You ask people around you if it would be OK that you use the accessible restroom

If unsure about the correct answer, please contact us on diversity.inclusion@cern.ch.

Annex 2: References and Resources

- CERN's [support structures for people with disabilities](#)
- [Moving Towards Disability Inclusion](#), ILO, 2015
- [World Report on Disability](#), WHO, Geneva
- [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), December 2006
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion ([EARN](#))
- [Inclusive Internship Programs, A How-To Guide For Employers](#), Department of Labor (US)
- Resources of the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) askjan.org
- United Spinal Association, Disability Etiquette, unitedspinal.org
- Disability Etiquette Guide, A Cook Ross INC. Publication, Spring 2014
- [Accessibilité au lieu de travail](#), Jerome Cibadier, Séminaire au CERN, 26 février 2016
- [Understanding Autism: An employer's guide](#), Organization for Autism Research
- [An employer's guide to managing professionals on the autism spectrum](#), JKP publications



For further information, advice
or guidance please contact the
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