

General Rules of Etiquette for Communicating with Persons for Specific Disabilities...

Hearing Impairments

- Face the person when you are speaking.
- Don't chew gum, smoke, bite a pencil, or cover your mouth while talking - it makes speech difficult to understand!
- Rephrase sentences or substitute words rather than repeat yourself again and again.
- Speak clearly and at a normal voice level.
- Communicate in writing, if necessary.
- Move away from noisy areas or the source of noise - loud air conditioning, loud music, TV and radio.
- Don't stand with bright light (window, sun) behind you - glare makes it difficult to see your face.
- Get the hearing-impaired person's attention and face in full view *before* talking.

Visual Impairments

- Be descriptive. You may have to help orient people with visual impairments and let them know what's coming up. If they are walking, tell them if they have to step up or step down, let them know if the door is to their right or left, and warn them of possible hazards.
- You don't have to speak loudly to people with visual impairments. Most of them can hear just fine.
- Offer to read written information for a person with a visual impairment, when appropriate.
- If you are asked to guide a person with a visual impairment, offer your arm instead of grabbing hers.

Speech Impairments

- Listen patiently. Don't complete sentences for the person unless he looks to you for help.
- Don't pretend you understand what a person with a speech disability says just to be polite.
- Ask the person to write down a word if you're not sure what she is saying.

Mobility Impairments

- Try sitting or crouching down to the approximate height of people in wheelchairs or scooters when you talk to them.

- Don't lean on a person's wheelchair unless you have his permission - it's his personal space.
- Be aware of what is accessible and not accessible to people in wheelchairs.
- Give a push only when asked.

Cognitive disability

- Use very clear, specific language.
- Condense lengthy directions into steps.
- Use short, concise instructions.
- Present verbal information at a relatively slow pace, with appropriate pauses for processing time and with repetition if necessary.
- Provide cues to help with transitions "In five minutes we¹ll be going to lunch."
- Reinforce information with pictures or other visual images.
- Use modeling, rehearsing, and role-playing.
- Use concrete rather than abstract language.
- Limit the use of sarcasm or subtle humor.
- If you aren¹t sure what to do or say, just ask the person what he/she needs.