

# Ask The Person



Disability is complex. Disability is personal. The same is true for people who have a disability. Here are some suggestions on how to communicate and interact with people who have a disability. However, the best advice comes from the person experiencing the impacts of disability; go ahead and confidently ASK THE PERSON.

 A white silhouette of a person sitting in a wheelchair, set against a blue square background.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not lean on a person's wheelchair – their mobility device is an extension of their personal space</li><li>• Sit down to speak to a person using a wheelchair for extended conversations</li><li>• Do not move a person using a wheelchair unless you have asked, and the person has confirmed that they need help</li></ul>
 A white silhouette of a person walking with a cane, set against a blue square background.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify yourself when interacting with a person who is blind</li><li>• Approach the handler not the service dog. Do not pet or distract a service dog</li><li>• Ask if the person would like to be guided, and offer your elbow if they accept</li><li>• As you walk with the person, tell them about obstacles they may find – doors, steps, etc.</li><li>• If you are leaving, inform them and ask if there is anything else they need before you go</li></ul>
 A white silhouette of a human ear with a hearing aid, set against a blue square background.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take the person's lead on communication style, or ask what their communication preferences are, if you are unsure</li><li>• Speak directly to the person, not the interpreter</li><li>• Make sure to get the person's attention. A tap on the shoulder is acceptable</li><li>• Speak clearly and naturally. Do not exaggerate or over-enunciate your words</li></ul>
 A white silhouette of a human head in profile, showing the brain, set against a blue square background.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listen patiently and pay close attention to confirm understanding</li><li>• Use clear language. Do not rush</li><li>• Give extra time to process information</li><li>• Communicate at an age-appropriate level</li><li>• Assume competence</li><li>• Social interactions may be difficult; do not judge. Offer alternative environments to interact.</li></ul>