



Interviewing people with disabilities Guidelines for journalists

The following suggestions are intended to make interviews more comfortable for media personnel and interviewees who have disabilities:

General suggestions

When talking with a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person rather than through an interpreter or a companion who may be along.

Use your usual tone of voice and your usual voice inflection.

Offer assistance in a dignified manner with sensitivity and respect. Be prepared to have the offer declined. If the offer is accepted, listen to instructions.

Remember that a person with one disability does not necessarily have additional disabilities.

Do not hesitate to use everyday expressions. It is fine to say "see you later" to a person who is visually impaired or "let's take a walk" to a person using a wheelchair.

Some specific situations

If a person has difficulty speaking or uses assistive technology to communicate, allow ample time for a response to your question. If you do not understand what a person is saying, ask them to repeat.

When speaking with someone who has learning difficulties, keep your language simple and make your concepts clear. Remember, however, that simple language is not childish language.

When meeting a person who is visually impaired, identify yourself and others who are with you. It is not necessary to speak loudly.

If you are selecting a place to interview a person who uses a wheelchair, make sure the place is wheelchair accessible.

If you are conversing with someone who is deaf and you are not using an interpreter, speak clearly and distinctly, but do not exaggerate. Provide a full view of your mouth. Talk at your usual rate and volume unless you are asked to slow down or speak up.

Service dogs are working animals. Ask their owner's permission before you pet them.

Remember

First and foremost, remember that people with disabilities are people first.

Conduct your interview as you would with anyone.

Be considerate without being patronizing.

Focus on the person's abilities, achievements, and individual qualities.

Enjoy your conversation.