



The Ability Center

INTERVIEWING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

When interviewing a person with a disability, relax! Conduct your interview as you would with anyone. Be clear and candid in your questioning and ask for clarification of terms or issues when necessary. Be upfront about deadlines, the focus of your story, and when and where it will appear.

Interviewing Etiquette

- Shake hands when introduced to someone with a disability. People with limited hand use or artificial limbs do shake hands.
- Speak directly to people with disabilities, not through their companions.
- Don't be embarrassed using such phrases as "See you soon," "Walk this way" or "Got to run." These are common expressions and are unlikely to offend.
- If you offer to help, wait until the offer is accepted.
- Consider the needs of people with disabilities when planning events.
- Conduct interviews in a manner that emphasizes abilities, achievements and individual qualities. Don't emphasize differences by putting people with disabilities on a pedestal.

When Interviewing People with Hearing Disabilities...

- Attract the person's attention by tapping on his or her shoulder or waving.
- If you are interviewing someone with a partial hearing loss, ask where it would be most comfortable for you to sit.
- If the person is lip-reading, look directly at him/her and speak slowly and clearly.
- Do not exaggerate lip movements or shout. Do speak expressively, as facial expressions, gestures and body movements will help him/her understand you.
- Position yourself facing the light source and keep hands and food away from your mouth when speaking.

When Interviewing People with Vision Disabilities...

- Always identify yourself and anyone else who might be present.
- When offering a handshake, say, "shall we shake hands?"
- When offering seating, place the person's hand on the back or arm of the seat. Let the person know if you move or need to end the conversation.

When Interviewing People with Speech Disabilities...

- Ask short questions that require short answers when possible.
- Do not feign understanding. Try rephrasing your questions, if necessary.

When Interviewing People Using a Wheelchair or Crutches...

- Do not lean on a person's wheelchair. The chair is a part of his/her body space. Sit or kneel to place yourself at eye level with the person you are interviewing. Make sure the interview site is accessible.

Check for:

- Reserved parking for people with disabilities
- A ramp or step-free entrance
- Accessible restrooms
- An elevator if the interview is not on the first floor
- Water fountains and telephones low enough for wheelchair users

Be sure to notify the interviewee if there are problems with the location. Discuss what needs to be done and make alternate plans.