

10 Disability Etiquette Tips

Part of the SLDS "Quick Reference Guide" series. For more guides, visit go.osu.edu/slds-guides

- 1.** When talking to a person who uses a sign language interpreter or has a personal care assistant, speak directly to the person rather than through the interpreter/assistant.
- 2.** When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands (shaking with the left hand is ok).
- 3.** When meeting a person who is blind/low-vision, identify yourself and others who may be with you. When talking about visual/spatial information, be descriptive and avoid vague language.
- 4.** If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- 5.** Do not interact with or pet a service dog, or ask for the service dog's name. Unless informed otherwise by their owner, a service dog is "on the job" and should not be distracted.
- 6.** Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
- 7.** Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod, or shake of the head. Don't pretend to understand the person if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will guide your understanding.
- 8.** When speaking at length with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, consider sitting down so as to place yourself at eye level in front of the person.
- 9.** To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. Not all people who are deaf can read lips. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and keep obstructions (e.g. hands, food) away from your mouth when speaking.
- 10.** Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seems to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

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