

How to talk to a person with disability.



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One of the biggest obstacles that often stop people talking to a person with disability is worrying about the correct way to speak to them! Usually, this hesitation leads to the worst possible outcome, and that is doing nothing even though you know that's not the right thing to do. The most important thing to remember about talking to anyone with a disability, is to be natural and talk to us as you would speak to anyone you meet.

Feeling confident speaking to a person with disability and using the correct language is fundamental to changing club attitudes and being more inclusive to people with disability.

These handy tips are designed to help you be confident in communicating with a person with disability when they enter your club.



1. Get rid of out-dated terms.

Avoid using terms like 'special needs', 'differently abled', 'handicapped' or use language that implies the person with disability is inspirational simply because they have disability.

2. Use person-first language.



The term ‘person with disability’ reminds us all to identify each other as people rather than being defined by a disability. For example, Sarah has blue eyes; having blue eyes doesn’t define Sarah; it’s just a part of who she is. You wouldn’t refer to her as “blue-eyed Sarah”, but you can say “Sarah who has blue eyes” when using person-first language.

3. Talk to a person directly.



If a person with disability attends the club with a carer, parent or interpreter, don't speak only to the carer continue to make eye contact with the person directly, the carer is there to offer support if required. The most important thing is to be natural and speak in a normal tone.

4. Have two-way conversations.



Even if you are nervous about saying the wrong thing or scared of causing offense to a person with disability, it is really important to continue having a two-way conversation to build understanding and ensure everyone feels comfortable.

5. Offer Help.



Offer help. Some people with disability may not want to ask for help because they are embarrassed that people will judge them or lose faith in them being able to perform their role. Offering help in the right situations shows that you care and indicates that people can come to you because you have shown that you are willing to support them.



Disability specific.



Autism

Avoid using idioms like “take a chair” as a person with Autism will take the literal meaning and pick up the chair. Instead ask “would you like to sit down?”.





Wheelchair

When talking to someone in a manual wheelchair, a motorised wheelchair user or scooter, ask them if they would prefer you to bend down to their eye level or not – some people prefer this, some people don't.

Blind and low vision.

If a person is blind or has low vision and is having difficulty finding a seat, always verbally ask the person if they require assistance before physically assisting them.

Greet people who are blind or have low vision as you approach them as they may not see you coming. Ensure they know you are talking to them by using their name and saying yours along with your title at the club.



Deaf and hard-of-hearing.

When a person is Deaf or is hard-of-hearing, face them as they may be able to lip read, remember to talk normally and clearly. Accompany any verbal instructions with clear physical directions. It's always good to have an option of written communication like a smartphone or pen and paper.





Intellectual disability.

The key is to use easy English, take the time to be patient and be prepared to ask things in a number of different ways. Be prepared to potentially repeat and use open questions, if necessary.



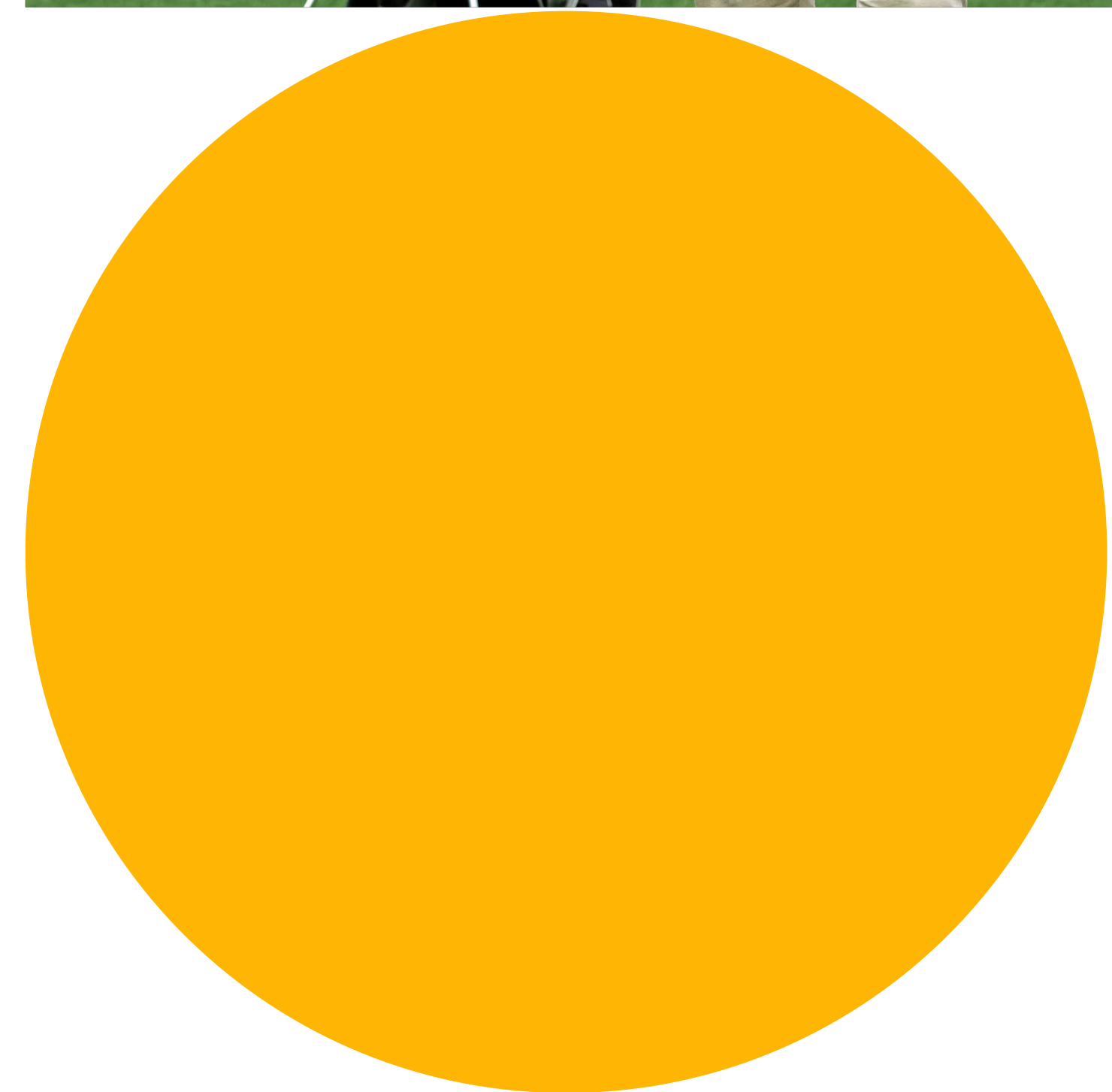
Non-verbal.

Don't assume a person who is non-verbal can't communicate, they may use an alternate communication device such as an iPad or assistive text to talk technology. They may also use other aids, such as paper and pencil, a communication book or board.





The most important thing to remember when talking to anyone with a disability, is to be natural. If you would like to know the best way to communicate with a person with disability, ask them in a genuine way.



There are some terms that aren't relevant, can cause offense or even reinforce negative stereotypes. That's why we've put together some examples of respectful alternatives to support you to be more inclusive:

Avoid 

Try 

Disabled

Person with disability

Handicapped

People with disability

Suffers from

Has disability

Wheelchair bound

Person who uses a wheelchair

Confined to a wheelchair

Wheelchair user

Mental

Person with a mental health condition

Crazy

Mad

Mentally retarded

Person with cognitive disability

Simple

Person with intellectual disability

Mentally disabled

Person with psychosocial disability

Mentally defective

Brain damaged

Person with a brain injury

Normal Person

Person without disability



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