



Disability Etiquette

Communicating with people
who have cognitive
impairments

Disability etiquette is a courteous and respectful way of communicating and interacting with people with disabilities.



What to Know

A cognitive impairment, sometimes called an intellectual disability, is a term used to refer to a person's limitations in mental skills such as communication, self-help, and social interaction.

Don't assume that the person has below-average intelligence.

Cognitive impairments may manifest themselves in a set of behaviors that seem unusual or even socially inappropriate.

What to Say

Ask the person if they would like assistance.

Use clear, plain language.

What to do

Be patient.

If a person does not respond to a verbal question, assume they understood you, but may not be able to speak.

Offer another means of communication, such as pen/paper, or a tablet.

Do not automatically try to shake hands.

Use simple, clear signage.

Don't stare.