Disability Language Guide

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Introduction

The Disability Language Guide is designed to provide insights into best practices for terminology and reporting on accessibility issues. While the primary goal of this document is to support media producers when discussing disability and accessibility, this document can also inform anyone approaching the topics of disability advocacy and experience.

It is adapted from the CiTR Accessibility Collective's *Best Practices for Reporting on Accessibility Issues Manual*; the Disabled People's Association, Singapore's *Glossary of Disability Terminology*; the Association of University Centres on Disability's *Respectful Disability Language Guide*; Ryerson University's *Inclusive Language in Media: A Canadian Style Guide*; and input from Vancouver's disability community with the support of the University of British Columbia's Equity Enhancement Fund.

These definitions and guidelines will help you develop content and to build your skills as a writer and journalist.

Disclaimers

Please note, all definitions provided in this guide are subject to the preference of the individual being interviewed, featured, and/or discussed. All folks with disabilities have vastly different lived experiences and therefore, may have varying preferences in terms of the language used to describe their identity and circumstances. **This may mean that one individual's preference and opinions may be antithetical to another's or to the definitions written in this language guide.** Be considerate and prioritize the comfort of the individual(s) you are working with. While this language guide is meant to be a tool to help assist you, communicating with a person with a disability is ultimately the best way to report on the topics in relation to accessibility and disability subject matters.

The language, preferences, and understandings of disability advocacy and experience evolve at a lightning pace and the terminology in this document may be outdated. This document is meant to be 'breathing' and will be updated on request.

Please submit any recommendations, comments, and/or concerns to this form.

Best practices

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when producing content around disability adapted from CiTR & *Discorder*'s Best Practices for Reporting on Accessibility Issues Manual.

Centre the voices of those with disabilities

As the disability justice saying goes, "Nothing about us, without us." When making content that speaks on disability issues, it is essential that you feature and highlight the voices of folks who experience disability. Do not include conjecture or secondary sources. Focus on the content recorded and the account of the individual with a disability. Consulting with experts or folks with a specific disability works to centre the voices of those with disabilities.

Don't be afraid to ask

If your interviewee has a disability, don't be afraid to ask about it. It is better to ask the person directly than to assume. Do some research before the interview begins and clarify any outstanding questions when you reach out for an interview. Do not ask invasive or inappropriate questions. Consider whether you need this information to better report on the topic. For example, what is your disability, how would you like to be identified, what questions are you not comfortable with me asking, what is your preferred terminology, etc.

Make sure their accessibility needs are met

You are likely to come across a variety of disabilities in this area of reporting, which adds a number of responsibilities to hosting an interview. Clarify with your interviewee whether you will meet in-person, talk over the phone, or meet virtually Many interviewees will be comfortable voicing their accessibility needs, but it is important that you ask regardless. Meet their needs as expressed and give them options on how best to do the interview. It is your responsibility to be flexible in order to make the experience comfortable for your subject.

Clarify terminology

Some folks with disabilities have specific terms they use for themselves and it's your responsibility to respect those terms. However, not everyone with disabilities–or even those that have a similar disability–prefer the same terms. That's why it is important to ask! You need to balance curiously respecting the individual's preferences and conducting your own research to responsibly interview the subject. It's important not to put the labour of explaining or educating about disability and its impacts back onto the shoulders of those who have a disability. If the source is not available or unable, ask a trusted family member or relevant organization that represents people with disabilities. Always use people-first language unless otherwise indicated by the source.

Ask if they want to talk about it

Before recording, ask if your interviewee wants to discuss their disability. In some cases, the subject's disability may not be relevant to the interview topic or they would like to avoid their disability as a whole. It's likely that the guest will want to speak about it, but only if it is relevant. Respect the requests of your interviewee.

Intersectionality is key

News stories often may not immediately appear to be related to disability, but intersect with disability when examined further. It is important that we understand disability to intersect with other experiences, identities, structures, and institutions. Disability is only one part of a person's selfhood and it is important to recognize other aspects of someone's story that may not be related to accessibility.

Keep in mind when reporting

Emphasize abilities, not limitations. Examining what people can do instead of what they can't is empowering.

Vocabulary

1. Able-bodied (adj)

Definition

Someone that does not have an illness, injury, or condition that makes it difficult to do the things that other people do and explicitly refers to physical disabilities.

Example(s)

The band has three disabled members and an able-bodied drummer.

Reason for inclusion

While ‘able-bodied’ is sometimes used incorrectly as the antonym of ‘disabled.’ A more appropriate option would be to use ‘non-disabled’ or ‘person without a disability’.

2. Ableism (n)

Definition

Discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities or who are perceived to have disabilities in favour of able-bodied people. Ableism characterizes people as defined by their disability and as inferior to non-disabled folks.

Example(s)

A friend repeatedly calls their ex-girlfriend “psychotic” for becoming jealous when they used to text other women. *(Stigmatizes mental illness)*

An older woman asks a young woman to move from a bus seat that’s reserved for people with disabilities. *(Assumes disability is only visible)*

Reason for inclusion

This term is why this document is necessary. Ableism is so prevalent and accepted that most non-disabled people don’t even register normalized forms of ableism in every system in society. It is important to interrogate assumptions you have around disabilities and make sure you are supporting and listening to your subject.

3. Access (n)

Definition

A means of approaching, entering, exiting, communicating with, or making use of a space, product, or programme.

Example(s)

A person who is deaf cannot access radio content that has not been transcribed.

Reason for inclusion

Access and disability issues are largely undercovered and a goal of this document and CiTR & *Discorder* as an independent media outlet is to encourage producers to discuss and create content around accessibility.

4. Accessibility (n)

Definition

The degree to which a production, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible, including people with disabilities, and can be viewed as the 'ability to access' and benefit from a system or entity.

Example(s)

Touch-screen voting machines meet the requirements for accessibility to people with disabilities.

Reason for inclusion

Not to be confused with 'usability,' which is the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specific goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction in a specified context of use.

5. Adaptive or assistive technology (n)

Definition

Assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices to help people with disabilities to independently perform activities of daily living such as mobility, eating, and dressing.

Example(s)

A wheelchair helps someone who has a physical disability to get to their daily activities, appointments, and workplace. A software that reads text aloud from a computer screen or a keyboard for someone who struggles with handwriting are also examples of assistive technology.

Reason for inclusion

Assistive technologies can promote independence by enabling people to perform tasks that they were formerly unable to accomplish on their own.

6. Advocate (v)

Definition

Acting, speaking, or writing to promote, protect, and defend the human rights of people with disabilities or other marginalized groups.

Example(s)

The popular Instagram account hot.crip uses memes to advocate for people with disabilities.

Reason for inclusion

People with disabilities are often left with the task of advocating for themselves for access to basic accomodation and respect from their communities, workplaces, and environments. It is important to recognize this labor and everyone's responsibility to advocate for people with disabilities and other marginalized groups whenever possible.

7. Augmentative communication (n)

Definition

The supplementation or replacement of speech through the use of aided or unaided techniques.

Example(s)

People who are deaf may use sign language, gestures, and fingerspelling as unaided communication, whereas technology is associated with aided communication, like text messaging.

Reason for inclusion

There are many forms of communication and as a media producer, it is important to reasonably adapt to whatever form the subject is most comfortable with.

8. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (n)

Definition

A developmental disorder that impacts how a person perceives and socializes with others. People with ASD may have challenges with social interactions and communication and by restricted or repetitive thought and/or behavior patterns. The autism 'spectrum' refers to the wide range of symptoms and severity that people with ASD may experience.

Someone with ASD may fail to respond to their name or appear not to hear you at times. They may have poor eye contact, lack facial expression, may not speak or have a delay in speech, or lose previous ability to say words or sentences. A symptom of ASD is hypersensitivity to sensory and social-environmental stimulation, which can trigger anxiety.

Example(s)

As a person with ASD, Logan appreciates having regular meal, activity, and sleep schedules.

Reason for inclusion

ASD is one of the largest disability groups and has many types. Maybe because of its prevalence, ASD is also one of the most commonly misunderstood disabilities. It is important to understand how complex and different the behaviour may be, especially, in an one-on-one interview or in a journalistic setting.

9. Barrier (n)

Definition

An obstacle preventing a person with a disability from living independently, working, travelling, and/or having access to buildings, services, forms, and information.

Example(s)

The loud sound system at a music venue is a barrier to people with all kinds of abilities attending shows, including D/deafness, ASD, sensory disabilities, and invisible disabilities.

Reason for inclusion

People with disabilities often encounter some sort of barrier. Barriers that affect people with physical disabilities are often the most obvious and the most commonly addressed but barriers to people with learning, cognitive, communication, and/or invisible disabilities require equal urgency and visibility.

10. Blindness, blind (n)

Definition

Fully or partially reduced functioning in one eye or both eyes' ability to detect and/or process images. However, 'blind' is usually used to describe the complete inability to see.

Terms like 'low vision,' 'partially sighted,' 'legally blind,' and 'totally blind' are used to describe the spectrum of blindness.

Example(s)

The person who is blind relies on their guide dog to navigate the physical world.

Reason for inclusion

There are many people who are blind or vision impaired. Always be considerate and ask if there is anything you can do to help.

11. Braille (n)

Definition

An alphabetic system of printing and writing for people who are blind or have low vision that consists of raised dots that can be interpreted by touch.

Example(s)

Running their fingers along the raised dots, Kai read the book written in braille.

Reason for inclusion

Ask your subject how they're most comfortable communicating. Braille may be used on radio switchboards to accommodate programmers who are blind.

12. Chronic disease, chronic illness (n)

Definition

A health condition that lasts longer than three months.

Example(s)

Alzheimer disease, Arthritis, Asthma, Cancer, COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), Crohn disease, Cystic fibrosis, Diabetes, and Dementia are all examples of chronic illnesses.

Reason for inclusion

Chronic illnesses often require sustained and often intensive attention, economic resources, and accommodations. When reporting on people with chronic illnesses, it is important to consider these amplified stresses and accommodate the subject considering these associated stresses and 'costs.'

13. Clear floor space (n)

Definition

The minimum unobstructed floor or ground space required to accommodate a single, stationary wheelchair and occupant.

Example(s)

Technically, the music venue was outfitted to be accessible to people with mobility aids, but all the wires, garbage cans, and gear made it impossible for a person with a physical disability to use the space.

Reason for inclusion

Accessibility is a constant practice, not an instance.

14. Cognitive disability (n)

Definition

People with cognitive disabilities often have difficulty displaying intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Cognition is understood to be general awareness and the ability to learn in particular.

Cognitive disorders are often associated with difficulty with perceiving, recognizing, choosing, and understanding, especially as barriers to learning, and are often conflated with intellectual and learning disabilities.

Example(s)

Intellectual disabilities, ASD, mental illness, brain injury, stroke, dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, and dementia.

Reason for inclusion

It is important to recognize the terms that are appropriate when referring to different types of disabilities. This term was included because it encompasses the experiences of many people and it is an appropriate term to use when describing a wide variety of disabilities.

15. Communication disability (n)

Definition

Any visual, hearing, or speech difficulties that limit a person's ability to comprehend, detect, or apply language and speech to engage in discourse effectively with others.

Communication disorders are on a spectrum and can range from sound substitution to an individual's inability to use their native language.

Example(s)

Sensory impairments, aphasia, learning disabilities, and speech disorders.

Reason for inclusion

It is important to recognize the terms that are appropriate when referring to different types of disabilities. This term was included because it encompasses the experiences of many people and it is an appropriate term to use when describing a wide variety of disabilities.

16. Congenital condition (n)

Definition

A condition that is present at or before birth that may result in physical, intellectual, and/or developmental disabilities.

Example(s)

Cleft lip and Cleft palate, Cerebral Palsy, Fragile X syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, Down syndrome, Spina Bifida, and Cystic Fibrosis.

Reason for inclusion

Congenital conditions are a long-term disability, which may have significant impacts on individuals, families, health-care systems, and societies. A common alternative phrasing is ‘birth defect,’ which is not an acceptable term to use.

17. Curb-cut effect (n)

Definition

A concept in universal design that asserts that products, laws, and programmes that benefit vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and people of color, ultimately benefit all of society.

The name references ‘curb-cuts,’ which are the ramps incorporated into sidewalk curbs to facilitate pedestrians with mobility aids, strollers, wagons, and other wheeled devices and exemplifies the universal benefits of integrating accessibility accommodations.

Example(s)

Closed captioning was added to movies to accommodate people with hearing impairments, but also benefit non-disabled people who like to talk during movies.

Reason for inclusion

This concept is well understood in the disabled and disability advocate communities but is applicable to all disciplines. Its simplicity is a powerful reminder that accessibility is not an unreasonable goal and in fact can be readily and universally realized.

18. Deafness, D/deaf (n)

Definition

‘deaf’ refers to the physical condition of fully or partially reduced functioning in one ear or both ears’ ability to detect and/or process sounds. However, ‘deaf’ is usually used to describe the complete inability to hear.

‘Deaf’ refers to the identity, culture, social beliefs, behaviors, art, literary traditions, history, values, and shared institutions of communities that are affected by deafness and which use sign languages as the main means of communication.

Terms like ‘hearing impaired,’ ‘hard of hearing,’ and ‘hearing loss’ are used to describe the spectrum of deafness.

Example(s)

As a person who is deaf, Jess communicates using sign language.

Reason for inclusion

There are many people who are D/deaf or hearing impaired. You may not even realize when you are speaking with someone who is deaf. Always be considerate and ask if there is anything you can do to help.

Someone who is deaf may not identify as Deaf. Deafness is a complete cultural identity that is distinct from other disability advocacy and communities.

19. Developmental disability (n)

Definition

An umbrella term that includes chronic intellectual and physical disabilities that can be cognitive or physical or both that arise before age 22 and are likely to be lifelong.

Example(s)

Even though their developmental disability made it challenging for Matt to walk, he still enjoyed cycling with the use of a hand cycle.

Reason for inclusion

It is important to recognize the terms that are appropriate when referring to different types of disabilities. This term was included because it encompasses the experiences of many people and it is an appropriate term to use when describing a wide variety of disabilities.

20. Digital divide (n)

Definition

The gap between individuals, groups, countries, and areas that have access to modern information and communications technology, and those that don't or have restricted access.

More information is being offered online than ever before, and because of that, the digital divide is continuously growing and limiting certain populations from having access to information.

Example(s)

Just when Jay had finished updating their website to meet WCAG AA requirements, WCAG 2.0 was announced.

Reason for inclusion

The digital divide affects people with disabilities more than any other group, since they face intrinsic problems of accessibility ranging from a fundamental lack of training in information and communications technology, to physical barriers, the lack of assistive computer technology, and inaccessible multimedia design.

21. Disability (n)

Definition

A condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usul standard of an individual or group and is used to refer to individual functioning, including physical, sensory, cognitive, and intellectual impairment; mental illness; and various types of chronic disease.

Disabilities are incredibly varied and include physical, cognitive, neurological, communication, emotional or behavioral, learning, and invisible disabilities.

Disability is conceptualized as being a multidimensional experience for the person involved and people with disabilities often face physical and social barriers that limit their body structure and function, activity, and participation.

Example(s)

ASD, stuttering, a broken leg, dyslexia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and Down Syndrome.

Reason for inclusion

This is a disability language guide! It is important to recognize that over 25% of the population identify as having some type of disability. Disabilities are all different but it is important to be considerate of people's needs.

Some individuals prefer the adjective 'disabled' to 'diversely abled' while some prefer the inverse. This term has been critiqued for its potential to centre the individual's disability over other aspects of their identity. Always ask your subject what makes them feel most comfortable.

22. Diversity (n)

Definition

Recognising and valuing differences between individuals and groups of people

Example(s)

The company focuses on hiring a diverse group of employees to ensure that many different perspectives are considered when modifying company policies.

Reason for inclusion

Disability is a part of diversity that is rarely prioritized and often overlooked. Diversity and inclusion are important concepts in terms of integration of people with disabilities into society.

23. Diverse abilities (adj)

Definition

An individual with diverse abilities is an alternative phrasing of an individual who is disabed and has been considered to be the more politically correct phrasing. Diverse abilities means that people's abilities are varied and the different abilities all have value. If talking about more than one disability, this is the common term. It can also encompass groups made up of non-disabled and disabled people.

Example(s)

The audience at the rock & rock show was made up of people with diverse abilities.

Reason for inclusion

Some individuals prefer this descriptor to ‘disabled’ while some prefer the inverse. This term has been critiqued for its potential to erase disability as an identity. Always ask your subject what makes them feel most comfortable.

24. Emotional or behavioral disorder (n)

Definition

An emotional or behavioral disorder impacts a person's ability to effectively recognize, interpret, control, and express fundamental emotions and are observed as internal behaviors such as anxiety and depression, external behaviors such as aggression, and low incidence behaviors which occur as responses to specific environmental triggers.

Example(s)

Lola’s Borderline personality disorder makes emotional regulation difficult and so they employ many self-soothing strategies to avoid being overwhelmed by changes in their environment.

Reason for inclusion

It is important to recognize the terms that are appropriate when referring to different types of disabilities. This term was included because it encompasses the experiences of many people and it is an appropriate term to use when describing a wide variety of disabilities.

25. Handrail (n)

Definition

A rail designed to be grasped by the hand so as to provide stability or support - commonly used while ascending or descending stairways and escalators in order to prevent injurious falls.

Example(s)

The senior uses the handrail on the steps to support themself while they ascend the stairs.

Reason for inclusion

Handrails can be very useful for people with mobility challenges, but are often overlooked in public facilities.

26. Hearing aids (n)

Definition

Tools that people with hearing impairments use to make sounds louder.

Example(s)

Because their hearing aids were not working, Skylar could not hear the fire alarm during the drill.

Reason for inclusion

It is important to know the proper names for assistive devices that people with disabilities often use.

27. Hearing impairment, hearing disability (n)

Definition

A decreased ability to register sounds to a degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means and can be due to disease, trauma, or congenital or degenerative conditions. Also called ‘audiological conditions.’

Example(s)

Hearing loss, tinnitus, and neuronitis.

Reason for inclusion

There are many people who are deaf or hearing impaired and you may not even realize it when you are speaking to them. Always be considerate and ask if there is anything you can do to help.

28. Impairment (n)

Definition

Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function. Impairments are often physically or biologically based.

Example(s)

After suffering from a spinal cord injury, Davis' impairments restricted their ability to walk.

Reason for inclusion

Impairments are physiological restrictions whereas disabilities are any functional limitations with regard to a particular activity as a result of an impairment and can include social barriers faced by people with disabilities.

29. Inclusion (n)

Definition

The act or practice of including, integrating, and accommodating people who have historically been excluded.

Example(s)

The music festival hired Sign Language interpreters at all the performances to be more inclusive to people who are hard of hearing.

Reason for inclusion

Individuals with disabilities have historically been excluded from many spaces. It is important to promote practices of inclusion and emphasize cultural shifts that focus on prioritizing accessibility and universal design.

30. Independent Living (IL) (n)

Definition

The philosophy and movement that people with disabilities have the right to live with dignity in their chosen community, participate in all aspects of their life, and control and make decisions about their own lives.

The movement works to rearticulate disabled lives and experiences outside of the predominantly medicalized view of disability and narratives that promote stigmas and negative views of people with disabilities that portray them as 'defective' or 'abnormal' or as burdens to themselves and their families.

Example(s)

All students have individualized programs which include extended learning opportunities, mobility, and independent living skills.

Reason for inclusion

The Independent Living movement is a foundation of disability advocacy and understanding its basic elements will make any media on accessibility issues more informed.

31. Inspiration porn (n)

Definition

The portrayal of people with disabilities as inspirational solely or in part on the basis of their disability and portrays people with disabilities as one-dimensional saints who only exist to warm the hearts and open the minds of non-disabled people. People with disabilities are used to inspire non-disabled people to try harder.

Example(s)

Forrest Gump (1994) epitomizes inspiration porn where a character with a disability 'overcomes' his disability in order to be successful.

Reason for inclusion

Inspiration porn others people who experience disability and depicts them as a burden while reducing, dehumanizing, and exceptionalizing people with disabilities and is a manifestation of ableism in the media.

32. Intellectual disability (n)

Definition

Disabilities characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning like reasoning, learning, and problem solving, and adaptive behavior like stress management, communication, and socialization. Intellectual disabilities originate before the age of 18.

People with intellectual disabilities may have challenges comprehending, reasoning, planning, and interacting with others.

Example(s)

Fragile X syndrome, Down syndrome, and fetal alcohol syndrome.

Reason for inclusion

It may be difficult for a person with an intellectual disability to fully understand what you may say and therefore, you will need to explain clearly and calmly and have patience. This term was previously known as ‘mental retardation,’ which is unacceptable phrasing.

33. Invisible disability (n)

Definition

An umbrella that includes any disabilities that are not immediately apparent to others. Also referred to as hidden disabilities.

Invisible disabilities are often thought of as neurological or intellectual disabilities. People with invisible disabilities are often accused of faking or imagining their disabilities because of the lack of visual evidence. This creates a hierarchy in the disabled community of who is disabled “enough” to receive accommodation.

Example(s)

Chronic pain, insomnia, some people who are visually impaired, and anxiety.

Reason for inclusion

It is estimated that 10% of people in the United States have a medical condition considered an invisible disability and you may not even realize when you are speaking with someone who has an invisible disability.

34. Learning disability (n)

Definition

A number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding, or use of verbal or non verbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning.

Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of oral language, reading, written language, and/or mathematics as well as involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, and perspective taking.

Specific learning disorders are in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in difficulties listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or doing mathematical calculations.

Example(s)

Dyslexia, Auditory Processing Disorder (APD), visual motor deficit, and Non-Verbal Learning Disorder (NVLD).

Reason for inclusion

Learning disabilities are invisible and quite common. It is important to use appropriate language when engaging in discussions about learning disabilities.

35. Mental illness (n)

Definition

A wide range of mental health conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behavior. Mental illnesses are behavioral or mental patterns that cause significant distress or impairment of personal functioning and can manifest as persistent, relapsing and remitting, or single episode instances.

Many disorders are defined by a combination of how a person behaves, feels, perceives, or things and may be associated with particular regions or the brain.

Example(s)

Anxiety, depression, Borderline Personality Disorder, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and addiction.

Reason for inclusion

Mental illness is heavily stigmatized, often invisible, and incredibly common. Be kind to everyone. You never know what battles they are fighting that you do not see.

36. Mobility aid (n)

Definition

A device designed to assist walking or otherwise improve the mobility of people with a mobility disability. Examples are crutches, walking frames, wheelchairs and mobility scooters. For people who are blind or visually impaired, the white cane and guide dog have a long history of use.

Example(s)

The common mobility aids in patients with poor vision are canes, sticks, and guide dogs.

Reason for inclusion

Mobility aids are an individual's support system to live their life independently. Be respectful and maybe helpful if needed by the person.

37. Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI) (n)

Definition

A person having a combination of hearing and vision impairments. Alternative phrasing includes deafblind, dual-sensory impairment, and dual sensory loss.

Example(s)

As a person who has MSI, Rona prefers tactile signals that they could feel instead of see or hear.

Reason for inclusion

Disability is often thought of as a one singular sensory issue. It is important to remember that people can have multiple types of disabilities and to be considerate of all of their needs.

38. Neurodevelopmental disorder (n)

Definition

A group of disorders that affect the development of the brain and/or nervous system, leading to altered brain function that may affect emotion, learning ability, self control, and memory. Neurodevelopmental disorders usually last for a person’s entire life.

Alternatively, a neurodevelopmental disorder may be a disorder of brain function that affects emotion, learning ability, self control, and memory which unfolds as an individual develops and grows.

Neurological disorders are currently recognized as intellectual, specific learning, motor, communication, neurotoxicant, tic, neurotoxicant, and genetic disorders, ASD, and traumatic brain injuries.

Example(s)

Tourette's, ASD, dyslexia, schizophrenia, fetal alcohol syndrome, and developmental coordination disorder.

Reason for inclusion

It is important to recognize the terms that are appropriate when referring to different types of disabilities. When reporting on subjects who have neurodevelopmental disorders, be patient and check in with what makes them comfortable.

39. Neurodiversity (adj)

Definition

The wide range of variation in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood, and other mental functions while de-emphasizing the medicalized and pathological attitudes towards neurodevelopmental disorders.

This term developed to challenge prevailing views that neurodevelopmental disorders inherently involve or are caused by a physical or mental disease.

Example(s)

The Universal Design for Learning is a teaching approach that supports and encourages neurodiversity.

Reason for inclusion

This term started as a way of describing someone on the autism spectrum, but because it's a relatively new term, consider offering the definition when you use it, particularly in work meant for a mainstream audience.

40. Non-disabled (adj)

Definition

A person or people without a disability. This term includes all types of disabilities including physical, neurodevelopmental, cognitive, learning, and intellectual disabilities.

Example(s)

Because of the disproportionate number of filmmakers who are non-disabled, films made about people with disabilities are often inspiration porn.

Reason for inclusion

This is the preferred antonym for disabled.

41. People-first language, person-first language (n)

Definition

Language that avoids perceived and subconscious dehumanization when talking with or about people with disabilities but putting a person before a diagnosis, describing what a person ‘has’ rather than asserting what a person ‘is’. Avoid using labels or adjectives to describe someone.

Example(s)

As a person with alcoholism, Addison celebrated 3 years of sobriety at Catfe.

Reason for inclusion

As a media producer, it is imperative that the language you’re using is respectful.

42. Physical disability (n)

Definition

A general term that covers a wide range of conditions that affects a person's mobility, physical capacity, stamina, and/or dexterity including limited use of upper and lower limb(s), manual dexterity, and disabilities in coordination with different organs of the body.

Example(s)

Arthritis, muscular dystrophy, and paralysis.

Reason for inclusion

It is important to recognize the terms that are appropriate when referring to different types of disabilities.

43. Quadriplegia, tetraplegia (n)

Definition

Paralysis caused by illness or injury that results in the partial or total loss of use of all four limbs and torso. The loss is usually sensory and motor, which means that both sensation and control are lost.

Example(s)

As a person who is quadriplegic, Alex uses a wheelchair to navigate the physical world.

Reason for inclusion

Quadriplegia is commonly known and highly stigmatized. Ask your subject what you can do to help.

44. Reasonable accommodation (n)

Definition

Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms that do not impose a disproportionate or undue burden.

Accommodation should be made to include and support people with disabilities as long as the adjustments are reasonably possible to do. In order to be reasonable accommodation should be within the financial and technological capabilities of the people doing the adjustments.

Example(s)

It is not reasonable to expect a small business of limited resources to renovate their entire office to hire a wheelchair user, but it could install a ramp and renovate the toilet to accommodate that new employee’s needs.

Reason for inclusion

The difficulty with this term is its relativity and implicit ableism that prevents organizations from accurately assessing their capacity. Accessibility improvements are often technological upgrades and construction projects, both of which are expensive and require a certain amount of accessible infrastructure within the organization and space.

45. Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), cumulative trauma disorders (n)

Definition

An umbrella term used to refer to several discrete conditions that can be associated with the main felt in muscles, nerves, and tendons caused by repetitive tasks, forceful exertions, vibrations, mechanical compression, or sustained awkward positions.

Example(s)

Carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, herniated disk, neuropathic pain, and fibromyalgia.

Reason for inclusion

RSI are relatively common and often invisible. Make sure you check in with your subject about their needs and what will make them the most comfortable.

46. Sensory impairment (n)

Definition

A disability that affects any of the senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, and spatial awareness.

Example(s)

Blindness, deafness, ASD, and sensory processing disorder.

Reason for inclusion

Many people have sensory impairment(s) and you may not even know! Always be considerate and ask if there is anything you can do to help.

47. Sign language, signing (n)

Definition

The system of manual signs for communication with and among people who have hearing impairments. There are many different dialects around the world, but American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) are commonly used in Canada.

Example(s)

Reason for inclusion

There are many forms of communication and as a media producer, it is important to reasonably adapt to whatever form the subject is most comfortable with.

48. Special Educational Needs (SEN) (n)

Definition

The educational requirements of students with a wide range of difficulties or disabilities that make learning a challenge for a child or young person either due to their disability preventing them from using the facilities or affecting the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding, or use of verbal or non verbal information.

Example(s)

Dyslexia, depression, ASD, vision and/or hearing impairment, and aphasia.

Reason for inclusion

Navigating having a disability in an educational setting is difficult, especially as a child. Be kind and patient. Ask people what works best for them.

49. Speech delay, alalia (n)

Definition

Delay in the development or use of the motor and mechanical aspects of speech production. Speech is the process of producing sounds using organs and structures like the lungs, vocal cords, mouth, tongue, teeth, etc.

Example(s)

Being unable to identify body parts at 4 months is an indicator of speech delay.

Reason for inclusion

Speech delay is distinct from language delay. When working in radio, it is important that your subject feels comfortable and is portrayed accurately. Check in with them and ask what you can do to help and be patient!

50. Stammering, stuttering (n)

Definition

A disorder that affects the flow of speech. Speaking with involuntary breaks and pauses, or with spasmodic repetitions of syllables or sounds.

Example(s)

As the young speaker walked on stage, they began to stutter the first few words of their speech before they were able to control their nerves.

Reason for inclusion

When working in radio, it is important that your subject feels comfortable and is portrayed accurately. Check in with them and ask what you can do to help and be patient!

51. Universal design (n)

Definition

The concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or status in life.

This refers to the design of products, environments, programmes, and services to be usable by as many people as possible without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

The design of the building, product, communication or service:

a. *Equitable use* - The product is useful and marketable to people with diverse disabilities;
b. *Flexibility in use* - The product accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities;
c. *Simple and intuitive use* - The product is easy to understand regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level;
d. *Perceptible information* - The product communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities;
e. *Tolerance for error* - The product minimises hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions;

f. *Low physical effort* - The product can be used efficiently and comfortably, helping reduce fatigue;
g. *Size and space for approach and use* - The product is of the proper size and provides appropriate space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture or mobility.

Example(s)

Accessible door handles, light switches, elevator controls, faucets, and tools with textured grips.

Reason for inclusion

It is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.

52. Visual impairment, visual disability (n)

Definition

A decreased ability to see to a degree that causes problems not pixable by usual means, such as glasses or medication, and can be due to disease, trauma, or congenital or degenerative conditions.

Example(s)

Extreme light sensitivity, night blindness, cataracts, and blindness.

Reason for inclusion

There are many people who are deaf or hearing impaired and you may not even realize it when you are speaking to them. Always be considerate and ask if there is anything you can do to help.

53. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (n)

Definition

Stable, referenceable, and universal technical standards for web accessibility organized under 4 principles: perceivable, orperable, understandable, and robust. Each principle includes testable success criteria graded at 3 levels: A, AA, and AAA.

The WCAG documents explain how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. Web 'content' generally refers to the information in a web page or web application,

including: natural information such as text, images, and sounds; code or markup that defines structure, presentation, etc.

WCAG is primarily intended for: web content developers (page authors, site designers, etc.); web authoring tool developers; web accessibility evaluation tool developers; others who want or need a standard for web accessibility, including for mobile accessibility.

Example(s)

Avery made the text larger on the website and made it a higher contrast colour from the background to align better with WCAG.

Reason for inclusion

As digital and online media and platforms become increasingly integrated into daily life, it is important to understand the expectations of universal accessibility in those spaces.

54. Wheelchair (n)

Definition

Mobility aid used by people with physical disabilities that make walking difficult or impossible..

Example(s)

Aidan decorated their wheelchair with stickers of their favourite band.

Reason for inclusion

Avoid phrases such as ‘confined to a wheelchair’ or ‘wheelchair-bound’, since wheelchair users or wheelchair riders view their wheelchairs as liberating and/or enabling rather than confining.

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