



National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa

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The following table gives

BASIC HINTS FOR INTERACTION WITH A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

THE GOLDEN RULE: ASK THE PERSON WITH THE DISABILITY

| HEARING IMPAIRED PEOPLE | PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES |
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| Wave or touch the person's shoulder to draw the person's attention. | Do not lean on, or touch a person's wheelchair, it is part of their personal space |
| Keep sentences short and use proper sentence construction. Rephrase, rather than repeat sentences that the person does not understand | Ask the person with a physical disability whether he/she prefers a chair with armrests or higher seats |
| Speak clearly so that the person can see and read your lips. Use a normal tone of voice when having a conversation with a person experiencing hearing loss, unless otherwise indicated by the person | Be prepared to offer assistance to persons with limited hand, wrist or arm function |
| Do not smoke, chew gum or let your hair cover your face whilst in conversation with a person experiencing hearing loss | Never ask a wheelchair user to hold e.g. Coats, etc. Do not put your drink, for instance, on the desktop attached to someone's wheelchair |
| Use facial expressions to correspond with the topic and mood of discussion. Keep eye contact and talk to the person rather than the interpreter | Do not push a person's wheelchair without their permission. |
| Be patient when either you or the person experiencing hearing loss, have difficulty in understanding or transferring a message | When talking to a wheelchair user, sit on a chair in order to sit at their eye-level. If you have to stand, stay at a distance so that the person does not strain their neck. |
| Do not change the subject or change your language in mid-sentence | Place items within a wheelchair user's grasp |
| Use basic signs to transfer your message | People using canes or crutches need their arms to balance themselves, so never grab the person. |
| Indicate unforeseen happenings e.g. sudden loud music or dogs fighting | Pulling out or pushing in a chair may present a problem. Always ask before offering help. |
| If you are standing with your back to a light source, such as a window, the glare may obscure your face and make it difficult for the person experiencing hearing loss to speech read | Put out mats on slippery floors for persons using canes or crutches although wheelchair users prefer floors without mats. |