

## IPC-Guidelines - Reporting on persons with disability



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**When speaking, interviewing or socialising with a person or an athlete with an impairment, here are a few general rules to remember:**

**Always identify the person first and then the impairment**, e.g. “an athlete with an impairment” not a “disabled athlete”. Sometimes it may not be necessary or relevant to mention the impairment, so don't feel obliged to do so. When it is relevant, just mention what the impairment is and then move on.

**Act naturally and don't monitor every word and action.** Don't be embarrassed if you use common expressions like “see you later” (to a person with a visual impairment) or “I'd better run along” (to someone who uses a wheelchair).

**Avoid using emotional wording** like “tragic”, “afflicted”, “victim”, or “confined to a wheelchair”. Emphasise the ability and not the limitation, ie, by saying that someone “uses a wheelchair” rather than “is confined” or “is wheelchair-bound”.

**Avoid portraying people with an impairment** who succeed as “extraordinary” or superhuman”. For example, overstating the achievements of athletes with an impairment inadvertently suggests the original expectations were not high.

**Portray the person as he/she is in real life.** For example, a person with an impairment might be an athlete but he/she may also be a parent, a civil engineer, a doctor, a business manager or a journalist. People do not want to be recipients of charity or pity. Remember that a person with an impairment isn't necessarily chronically sick or unhealthy.

**Always ask a person with an impairment if he/she would like assistance** before rushing in. Your help may not be needed. However, it is quite all right to offer help. If your assistance is needed then listen or ask for instructions.

**When talking with a person who has an impairment, speak directly** to that person rather than a companion or interpreter.

**Don't forget that people with an impairment may need your patience** and sufficient time to act independently. Give the person extra time to speak if they are using a communication aid or have a learning impairment.

**Ask persons with an impairment to repeat** themselves if you do not understand them.  
**Respect the person's personal space** and remember that a wheelchair is part of a person's personal space.

**When greeting a person, if you normally shake hands**, then offer the same gesture, even if the person has limited use of his/her hands or wears prosthesis. The person will let you know if a certain action is appropriate or not.

Do not assume that a person with a physical impairment also has a hearing impairment or that his/her mental capacity is diminished in any way. Speak in a normal tone and do not use language that is condescending.