

# Glossary of Acceptable and Unacceptable Terms

ACCEPTABLE TERMS	UNACCEPTABLE TERMS
Person with a disability / has a disability people with disabilities / have disabilities	Crippled, the disabled / the handicapped/, invalids, patients
Disability: A general term used for a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability (i.e. to walk or lift); may refer to a physical, mental or sensory condition.	Handicap, handicapped, or handicapped person
Speech or communication disability disabled person	Tongue-tied, mute crippled, deformed, defective
Wheelchair user / uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair-bound / confined to a wheelchair most individuals view wheelchairs and other mobility devices as liberating and a means of getting around
Person with a congenital disability / birth anomaly	Birth defect / affliction
People who are blind / visually impaired: person who is hard of hearing/hearing impaired person possesses listening and hearing abilities adequate for ordinary communications; many hard of hearing individuals use a hearing aid. Person who is deaf (Deafness is a cultural phenomenon and should be capitalized in those instances.)	The blind - hearing impaired (translates as "broken hearing" in sign language) deaf-mute deaf and dumb
Person who has an intellectual or cognitive disability.	Retarded, moron, imbecile, idiot: These labels are offensive to people who bear the label.
Person who has epilepsy; people with seizure disorders seizure / epileptic episode or event	The epileptic (to describe a person); epileptics fits
Able-bodied: Able to walk, see, hear, etc.; people who are not disabled	Healthy: When used to contrast with "disabled," healthy implies that the person with a disability is unhealthy. Many people with disabilities have excellent health.
People who do not have a disability	Normal: When used as the opposite of disabled, this implies that the disabled person is abnormal. No one wants to be labeled as abnormal.
A person who has (name of disability). For example: A person who has multiple sclerosis.	Afflicted with, suffers from: Most people with disabilities do not regard themselves as afflicted or suffering continually.



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## EEO Compliance Program Management Directive - 715 Program Special Emphasis Programs

Equality is one of the most fundamental principles of our nation's heritage. The Equal Opportunity Programs Office provides center-wide leadership and advice on issues of civil rights, equal employment opportunity, diversity, and reasonable accommodations.

### For more information, please contact:

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Space Administration



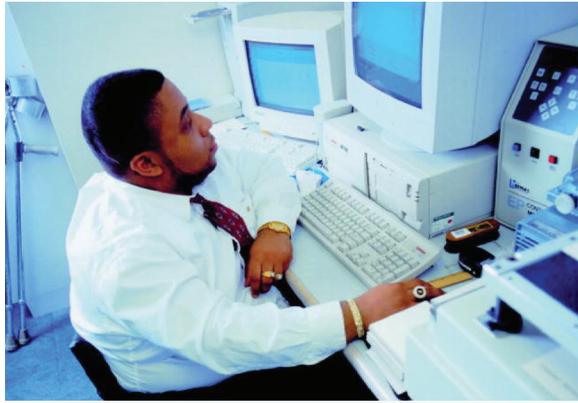
# Disability Etiquette



*Eliminating Barriers to  
Equal Employment Opportunities  
at GSFC*

www.nasa.gov

Equal Opportunity Programs Office



*People with disabilities are first and foremost, individual human beings; have you ever experienced an awkward moment when meeting or interacting with a co-worker or other employee with a disability? If you have, hopefully you got through it and now you are comfortable engaging with personnel with a disability. Individuals with a disability have feelings and desire to be treated respectfully just as you do. You may not always recognize a person's disability so just be yourself. Let common sense and friendship break down any barriers you may encounter.*

## **Tips on When or Not to Help**

Assist when necessary or requested, but do not discourage their active participation.

Allow a person dignity to do what s/he wants to do for him or herself.

**Do not** obscure your face when communicating with a person who has a hearing loss.

Remember some people with disabilities depend on their arms for balance so grabbing them, even if your intention is to assist, could knock them off balance.

Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to do or say something.

## **Communication**

Do not leave a person with a disability out of a conversation because you feel awkward or fear that s/he will feel uncomfortable. Always speak directly to the person with a disability, not to his companion, aide or sign language interpreter.

A handshake is not a standard greeting for everyone. A smile along with a spoken greeting is always appropriate.

## **Environments**

Be considerate while in office settings; a noisy or dark environment, or people talking simultaneously, can make it difficult for people with a vision, speech, or hearing impairment.

Ensure clear paths of travel are available for people who use wheelchairs or are blind. Describe surroundings and events taking place (especially obstacles) to a blind person.

Be mindful that a person with a chemical sensitivity may have a reaction to smoke, perfume, cleaning products, or other forms of toxins in the workplace.

## **Hidden Disabilities**

Not all disabilities are apparent. A person may have trouble following a conversation, may not respond when you call, or may make a request that seems strange to you, or may say or do something that seems inappropriate. The person may have a hidden disability, such as low vision, a hearing disability, traumatic brain injury, intellectual disability, psychiatric disability, or learning disability.

Don't make assumptions about the person or his or her disability. Be open-minded. Treat him or her as you would want to be treated.

## **Epileptic or Seizure Disorders**

They may be convulsive, or the person may appear to be in a trance. During a seizure, the person may walk or make other movements while he is, in effect, unconscious. If a person has a seizure, you cannot do anything to stop it. If he has fallen, be sure his head is protected and wait for the seizure to end.



## **Tips on Specific Disabilities**

**When you are with a person who uses a wheelchair...**

**Do not** ask a person using a wheelchair to hold things for you; the wheelchair is part of their personal space.

Be aware that people who use wheelchairs have different disabilities and varying abilities. Some are mobile enough to even walk for short distances.

When talking to a person in a wheelchair, consider grabbing a chair and sitting at their level. If that is not possible, stand at a slight distance, so that they are not straining their neck to make eye contact with you.

**When talking with a person who is deaf or uses a hearing aid...**

Talk directly to the person, even when a sign language interpreter is present.

**When interacting with a person who is blind or has a disability that affects vision...**

Never grab an individual until requested or seek permission first. When asked, allow him/ her to take your arm; then walk slightly ahead. Point out doors, stairs, or curbs, and other obstacles as you approach them.

**Do not** pet or distract a guide dog. The dog is responsible for its owner's safety and is always working, it is not a pet.

Portions of the material used in this pamphlet have been taken directly from the sites listed from the back. The information is not all inclusive, but does offer some important tips for respecting a group of diverse employees amongst our NASA personnel.