

Being Friends

Background

Disability is something that some people are born with, acquire through illness or injury as they grow to and through adulthood, or develop as they naturally age. **Every individual's experience of their disability is different and how each person chooses to think of their disability is different.** This is true even when two people have the same kind of disability. Respectful interactions and inclusive approaches to disability incorporate this idea. A person with a disability is just another person (peer, parent, family member, or stranger) who deserves respect, friendship, to be heard and seen, and to be a part of the community.

To learn about disability etiquette tips and ideas, visit:

United Spinal's [Disability Etiquette Guide](#)

Kids Included Together [Disability Inclusion Resources](#)

ADA National Network's [Guidelines for Writing About People with Disabilities](#)

Conversation Guide

When speaking to children about being respectful and building friendships with peers with disabilities, it is important to convey the key concepts to them in language or terminology that is meaningful to them. Here is a sample suggestion of how this might be done.

Everyone is different, and that's what makes the world beautiful! Some people have disabilities, which means they might do things in a different way or sometimes need extra help. Some people use wheelchairs, hearing aids, service animals, or other tools to do everyday things. What matters most is treating everyone with kindness and respect.

Information, materials, and/or technical assistance are intended solely as informal guidance, and are neither a determination of your legal rights or responsibilities under the ADA, nor binding on any agency with enforcement responsibility under the ADA.

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How to Be a Good Friend

If you meet someone with a disability, talk to them just like you would talk to anyone else. Look at them, smile, and say hello. If someone uses a wheelchair or talks differently, that's just part of who they are. If you're not sure what to do, it's always okay to ask politely, "Would you like help?" and listen to their answer. And it's okay to be curious about how someone might do something, but you should ask questions in a nice respectful way!