

# We're recognized as leaders

Both media and disabilities organizations have lauded Ernst & Young's efforts to create a supportive workplace for people with disabilities. Our people stay active in several disabilities organizations and regularly share our firm's leading practices with other companies.

- ▶ In 2008, the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy invited Ernst & Young to be one of five companies studied for their leading practices in building disabilities-friendly work cultures.
- ▶ In 2008 and 2007, *CAREERS & the disABLED* magazine listed Ernst & Young among the 50 top employers in the United States for people with disabilities – the only Big Four firm to appear on the list.
- ▶ In 2007, we were featured in the Romano Group's documentary on companies that hire and support employees with disabilities. Steve Howe, Inclusiveness Executive Sponsor, and Lori Golden, AccessAbilities Leader, were interviewed.
- ▶ In 2007, Ernst & Young was one of just six companies, and the only professional services firm, to receive a Disability Matters Award from *Work Life Matters* magazine. Incidentally, we won the award in its inaugural year.



# We're recognized as leaders

- ▶ Ernst & Young is a member of the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN), the National Business and Disabilities Council (NBDC), the American Association of People with Disabilities and the Disabilities Funders Network.
- ▶ We participate in several networking groups, including the Wall Street Group and the Disabilities Employment Working Group.
- ▶ To broaden our reach to qualified job candidates with disabilities, we work with EARN, a disabled-veteran-owned organization under contract to the Office of Disability Employment Policy, which has highlighted our job openings to its national network of 6,000 disabilities employment organizations and campus offices of disabilities services. We also post openings on the Disaboom website for people with disabilities.
- ▶ We are sponsors of the non-profit Career Opportunities for Students With Disabilities' national meeting and team with them to promote Ernst & Young jobs to qualified college students with disabilities.
- ▶ In 2008, we are hosting a thought leadership event in collaboration with NBDC on "Learning Disabilities in the Workplace." This is the first forum to begin a dialogue around an issue that some authorities believe will be an increasing challenge for employers over the next few years.
- ▶ In 2008, AccessAbilities has been invited to share leading practices in presentations for disabilities organizations including the USBLN, the Inclusion Network, the Office of Disability Employment Policy and the Job Accommodation Network. Media coverage included articles in *DiversityInc*, the Society of Human Resource Management Online and *The New York Times*.

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# Is it okay?

## A quick course in disabilities etiquette

### Rules to remember

- ▶ Shaking hands upon first meeting is appropriate with all individuals.
- ▶ Feel free to offer assistance, but wait until your offer is accepted before helping.
- ▶ Listen to any instructions the person may give you.
- ▶ Be considerate of the extra time a person with disabilities may require.
- ▶ Feel free to use terms like, “see, hear or walk,” with common expressions such as, “Do you see what I mean?” People with disabilities use these expressions, too.



### Mobility

- ▶ When speaking with someone who is in a wheelchair, sit down so you can maintain eye contact.
- ▶ Do not push a wheelchair without first asking if assistance is needed. In general, don't touch assistive devices such as canes, scooters or wheelchairs without permission. Assistive devices are considered personal space.
- ▶ Offer assistance, but if it's declined, do not be offended.
- ▶ Respect the individual's dignity and independence; ask how you can help and listen to instructions.

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### Hearing

- ▶ If a person is deaf, lightly touch the person on the shoulder to gain attention.
- ▶ Face the person directly and speak normally. Keep your hands away from your mouth. Do not exaggerate lip movements.
- ▶ If you are not being understood, use a different word, use gestures, or write it down.
- ▶ If an interpreter is present, keep eye contact with and address the individual you are speaking with, not the interpreter.
- ▶ If an interpreter is involved, be aware that the interpreter will be a few words behind in the conversation. Leave time to catch up.

### Vision

- ▶ Identify yourself and anyone else in the room.
- ▶ When walking with someone who has low vision, ask if the person would like to take your arm. If the answer is yes, let the person take your arm at the elbow. Avoid escalators and revolving doors.
- ▶ If assisting someone who has low vision, be specific in giving directions.
- ▶ If walking with someone using a cane or guide dog, walk on the side away from the cane or service animal.
- ▶ Don't pet or distract a service dog.


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# You don't say

## A 60-second guide to disabilities-friendly language

*The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.*

– Mark Twain

### Rules to remember

1. Refer to the person first, then the disability. A disability is what someone has, not what someone is. Examples “manager who has deafness”, not “deaf manager”; people with disabilities, not “disabled people” or “the disabled.”
2. Avoid expressions that portray people with disabilities as victims. Examples: “suffers from”, “challenged by”, or “struggles with.”

<b>Bad words</b>	<b>Better words</b>
Handicapped	Person with disabilities
Crippled	Person who has disabilities
Disabled	
Special needs	
Retarded	Person with developmental disabilities
Retard	Person with mental retardation
	Has cognitive disabilities
Mentally ill	Person with mental health disabilities
	Person with a mental health condition
	Person with mental health issues
Normal	Person without disabilities
	Typically abled
Deaf and dumb	Person who is deaf and communicates through sign language, writing, etc.
Deaf mute	
Brain damaged	Person with a brain injury
Birth defects	Congenital disabilities
Dwarf	Of short stature
Midget	Is a little person
Special	Needs accommodations

# Conference call etiquette

1. Speak slowly and clearly.
2. Spell out acronyms the first time you use them.
3. Use your mute and remember to turn it off before speaking.
4. Identify yourself each time you speak, e.g.: "This is..."
5. When addressing someone specifically, say his/her name to ensure you have that person's attention.
6. Avoid sidebar conversations.
7. If your cell connection is distorted, drop the call.



## **If an interpreter or relay operator is involved:**

8. Say "Go ahead" after you finish speaking so participants/relay operators know when the discussion stops and starts.
9. Do not address an interpreter/relay operator; address the call participant.
10. Do not use acronyms.
11. Be patient. It takes time for a relay operator to type a message, for the participant to read and respond, and for the operator to read the response aloud.


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# Four ways to be inclusive



## **Watch your words**

You may offend someone without even realizing it. For example, you make a silly mistake and say, “That was retarded!” But what if the colleague or client you’re working with has a family member with Down syndrome or another cognitive disability? Other words, like “crippled” and “handicapped” can be hurtful too. “People with disabilities” is the preferred term. Brush up on disabilities-friendly language by reviewing the one-page AccessAbilities brief, “You don’t say.”

## **Just ask**

Before you help someone with a disability, ask the person if he or she needs help. By making an assumption that a task or activity is burdensome for someone, you may be limiting his or her opportunity to be independent or to contribute.

## **Respect differences**

People with disabilities can accomplish what people with typical abilities can accomplish; they just may do things differently. This statement is true not only with apparent issues like vision, hearing or mobility impairments, but also with hidden disabilities. For example, people with serious health conditions may have less energy on some days, so may need to work flexibly to stay productive.

## **Resist judgment**

People with disabilities aren’t heroes. People with serious health conditions who “don’t look sick” aren’t any less ill. Differing abilities don’t define a person – positively or negatively – any more than blue eyes or black hair do. Abilities differ in each of us; character and talent are universal.

# Did you know?

- ▶ There are 49.7 million people in the United States with some type of disability. This translates to one in five Americans. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)
- ▶ Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Americans with disabilities increased 25%, outpacing any other subgroup of the US population. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)
- ▶ Of the 69.6 million families in the United States, more than 20 million have at least one family member with a disability. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)
- ▶ People with disabilities make up the nation's largest minority group, and the only group any of us can become a member of at any time. (Source: National Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2006)
- ▶ If you currently don't have a disability, you have a one in five chance of acquiring one at some point in your work life. (Source: National Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2006)
- ▶ There are 133 million people in the US living with a chronic health condition. That number is expected to increase by more than 1% a year to 150 million by 2030. (Source: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 1996)
- ▶ 75% of people with chronic health conditions are younger than 65. (Source: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 1996)


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# Six things to say to someone with a chronic condition or illness

1. "I'm here to support you. Let me know if you ever want to talk." Offering support and the willingness to listen are the best things we can do for our colleagues.
2. "How are you?" This can be more than polite; it shows caring and creates an opportunity to be supportive. But ask only if you're prepared to really listen, as you may receive a reply that requires your understanding and empathy.
3. "Nice [insert item of clothing]. You look great today." A compliment with no reference to illness is always welcome.
4. "I'm sorry. I know it's got to be hard." This is respectful empathy and helps the other person feel his or her experience is validated and understood.
5. "Tell me what I can do to help" or even better, "Would it be helpful if I [insert whatever might be relevant] scheduled the meetings on Mondays so they're further away from treatment days?" Many people are reluctant to ask for help. The more specific your offer is, the easier it is to accept.
6. "Would you like me to talk to [insert contact name] about some of the resources that [the contact] found helpful in coping with this?" There is so much information available that it can be overwhelming. Personal recommendations never hurt and may help identify the most useful resources.

# Nine things not to say to someone with a chronic condition or illness

1. Don't be silent. An illness or chronic health condition, especially when newly diagnosed, can become "the elephant in the room" and make everyone uncomfortable. If someone you work closely with is diagnosed and has made it public, acknowledge it. Suggestions are provided on the reverse side.
2. "But you look so good!" Looking good and feeling good aren't the same things. This intended compliment can come across as insensitive. It might suggest that you doubt that the condition is real or serious or could make your listener question your credibility.
3. "I know, I get those symptoms too." Though usually meant as empathy, this can minimize the seriousness of the situation. It can detract from what the person is trying to say by shifting focus to your own condition.
4. "My cousin (or someone else) had that, and she's managing fine." It's unrealistic to compare the extent of one person's condition to another's. People are different and so are the effects of illness and treatment.
5. "It's probably just stress." You may mean to be reassuring, but its best not to diagnose or minimize another person's experience.
6. "You're back in the office. You must be feeling okay." People come back to work for all kinds of reasons – the pay, the work itself, the socializing, or even for distraction from the illness/condition. Being at work doesn't mean there's no pain, fatigue, or other symptoms.
7. "I really admire your courage." This well-intentioned comment may sound condescending. People with serious illnesses aren't heroes. There's nothing remarkable in doing the best they can. That's what all of us do.

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Some of the content above was adapted from Robyn Heller Gerbush's 2007 article "But You Look So Good! ..." in *DiversityInc* and from "Cancer Etiquette 101" by Roger and Kathy Cawthon of The Cancer Crusade website.

8. "Dan had that and [insert bad outcome]." It's never helpful to share frightening stories.
9. "My neighbor (or someone else) had the very same thing and [insert good outcome]." Be careful here. Success stories are fine, but it's not respectful to compare one person's condition to another's. You cannot truly know, and no two people or conditions are exactly alike.