



COMMUNICATION

Surf Life Saving for People with a Disability



COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Effectively communicating with individuals with disabilities is fundamental for fostering inclusivity. It requires active listening and understanding of individual needs. Avoid assumptions and prejudices by starting with open-ended questions to establish the most effective communication approach.

General communication tips

- Address the individual directly, rather than through intermediaries such as the parent, support worker or coach.
- Adjust your communication style to be age-appropriate.
- Request information on the specific assistance required.
- Practice patience and give ample time for expression and comprehension.
- Ask for clarification when necessary.

Non-verbal communication

- Respect diverse communication methods such as writing, sign language, or gestures.
- Interpret non-verbal cues and respond accordingly.
- Initiate and conclude conversations in a respectful manner.
- Utilise positive body language and facial expressions.

People with dyslexia

- Use clear and concise language, employing dyslexia-friendly fonts or audio formats.
- Utilise visual aids and diagrams alongside verbal information.
- Allow additional time for processing and encourage a question-friendly environment.

People with colour blindness

- Avoid relying solely on colour-coding for crucial information.
- Incorporate labels, symbols, or textures to supplement colour-based information.
- Ensure high contrasts in visual materials for enhanced visibility.

People with Autism

- Establish a structured and predictable communication environment.
- Use clear, unambiguous language and respect personal space and sensory sensitivities.
- Provide processing time and utilise visual cues and written instructions.

People with an intellectual disability

- Keep explanations brief and clear, ensuring comprehension.
- Use an age-appropriate tone and simplify language.
- Respect the varying degrees of comprehension among individuals.

People using a wheelchair

- Position yourself at eye level by sitting or kneeling.
- Respect the wheelchair as personal space and avoid unwanted contact.

People with a hearing impairment

- Maintain visibility of your face and mouth and avoid speaking with the light behind you.
- Speak clearly without shouting and establish the person's attention before communicating.
- Consider quieter settings for better communication.
- Consider engaging Auslan interpreters at meetings, competitions and other events.

People with a vision impairment

- Address them by name and introduce yourself.
- Understand their visual capabilities and adjust your position accordingly.
- Provide clear verbal instructions and offer manual guidance when requested.

Adhering to these communication tips helps create an inclusive and respectful environment for all individuals, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

To provide feedback on this resource, please email us at: diversitycoordinator@sls.com.au