

**Guide for accessible and inclusive content**

These Guidelines aim to assist media organisations to ensure that content is open, transparent, inclusive and accessible. They will help journalists to give a voice to people with disability.

Remember: Media has the power to change community attitudes towards people with disability.

## 1. Content

Recommended:

* Let people with disability tell their story
* Show the real lives of people with disability
* Show the attitudinal or physical barriers for people with disability in the community, rather than showing people as “broken” and needing “treatments” and “cures”
* Use language that is respectful, non-biased and preferred by the person with disability. (See more information in Point 5)

Avoid:

* Using stereotypes of people with disability
* Showing people with disability as needing a “cure” or as deviating from a “norm”
* Talking down to people with disability (for example by calling them "inspirational" just because of their disability)

## 2. Narrative Control

Ensure that, as far as possible, people with disability (and their family, friends and carers) have the opportunity to say what they think and tell their own stories, in the way they prefer to communicate and in their own words.

## 3. Portrayal of disability

Ensure that the content shows the real lives of people with disability. Aim to:

- show disability in a way that helps other people understand the things that stop people with disability from enjoying their rights and from being a part of the world around them

- show that disability is a natural and real part of life

- not show disability in any way that reinforces stereotypes about people with disability or that talks down to people with disability

- keep in mind the UN Convention (Article 8 of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)) which states that media should portray people with disability in a way that is fair, inclusive and respectful of their rights.

## 4. Diversity

When discussing disability broadly, content should aim to show the diversity of people with disability, including the range of disabilities (physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual). Disability may be present at birth, or acquired later in life, it may be visible or invisible.

## 5. Use of language

Some people prefer the term “people with disability” (*person-first language)* which places the person before the disability – this is generally the preferred usage in Australia. Other people prefer the term “disabled people” (*identity-first language*) when describing people with disability – which is commonly used in UK.

The starting principle should be to use the words that the person with disability prefers.

For example:

- Some people call themselves “Autistic” and other people call themselves “person with Autism”

- Some groups agree on the words they prefer, such as “person with Down syndrome”

- A general exception to the “people-first” language guideline: people who are deaf or blind usually prefer identify-first language, for example “Deaf person” (with a capital D) or “blind person” (with a lower case ‘b’).

- Sometimes people with disability will use words to talk about themselves that they do not like other people outside their group to use, for example “crip” and “gimp”- this is known as “reclaiming” a word that has been used in a negative way, by giving it a positive meaning in the group. Avoid using these words unless you are quoting someone who has used these words.

- Some words were once common, but are now universally regarded as insulting, such as “retarded”, “mongoloid” and “spastic”.

- Many people also agree that you should not use words like “handicapped”, “wheel-chair bound”, “confined to a wheelchair” or “deformed”. Where it is relevant to refer to a person’s use of a wheelchair, the term “wheelchair user” is appropriate.

- There are some other words that are not as offensive, but are not a good choice because of how they make people with disability feel, and how they make other people think about disability, such as “suffer”, “stricken”, “afflicted”, “inspirational, “brave”, “tragic”, “overcoming”, “dependent”, “sick”, “victim”, “patient”, etc.

If in doubt, ask the person you are interviewing about their preferred language. If this is not possible or there isn’t a clear preference, you may consider using “person-first” language as an appropriate default position, as this is the language used in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## 6. Accessibility

Media organisations should:

- ensure that content can be seen or understood in different formats depending on a person’s disability and the technology and other supports they use. For example, large print, braille, audio description, audio transcript, captioned video, sign language, Plain English and Easy Read.

- as best as possible, make print or hard copy documents accessible and easy to understand, taking into account font, colour, colour contrast, document structure/reading order and spacing.

- ensure that online content (like a PDF or Word file) follows the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/) by the World Wide Web Consortium, and can be seen on different types of devices, systems or technologies.