



<http://www.askearn.org/topics/retention-advancement/disability-etiquette/>

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

A basic understanding of disability etiquette can help make employees feel more comfortable when interacting with coworkers and supervisors with disabilities and can help prevent awkward situations. Good disability etiquette can also expand business opportunities and help organizations serve customers more effectively.

Disability etiquette refers to respectful communication and interaction with people who have disabilities. The principles of disability etiquette are fairly simple. First and foremost, rely on common sense to guide your interactions with people with disabilities and behave in the same courteous and respectful way with individuals with disabilities that you would with anyone.

Beyond that, there are several simple steps everyone can take to ensure appropriate disability etiquette:

- Use “[people first](#)” language which recognizes that individuals are more than their disabilities.
- Don’t ask questions about a person’s disability unless it is brought up by the individual.
- If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- Speak directly to the person.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions when you are unsure of what to do.
- When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who have artificial limbs can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is also an acceptable greeting.)
- Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others.

A number of resources can assist employers to educate employees about disability etiquette, and brushing up on their own skills. These include a variety of [disability etiquette resources](#) from the Job Accommodation Network as well as its turn-key training module titled [Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence](#). Local disability service providers or Centers for Independent Living are also often available to provide in-person training on disability etiquette.