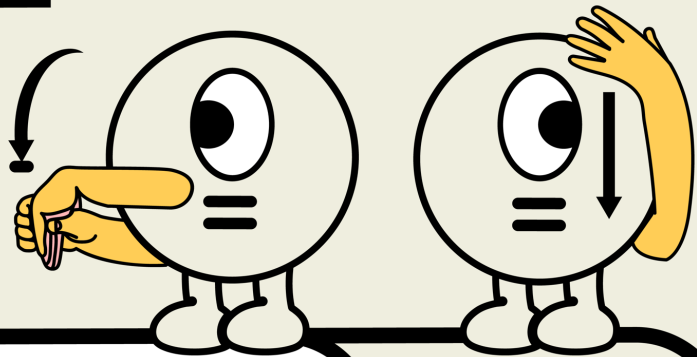


**the**



**inclusive code**

# Executive summary

## **Introducing, The Inclusive Code.**

Aotearoa is officially a superdiverse nation. Yet many communities are often overlooked or underrepresented in marketing, advertising and communications.

Excluding audiences is not only detrimental to society, but a major missed opportunity to deliver better commercial or organisational outcomes.

The Inclusive Code is a support to help the industry improve their practice.

The Inclusive Code is a series of insider's guides designed in partnership with communities that deserve better, more authentic inclusion in our work.

# Executive summary

## The Inclusive Code: Chapter 1

The first chapter of The Inclusive Code has been co-created with a rōpū of leaders and experts within the disabled community.

Through the process of co-creation, we discovered the greatest barriers to inclusion, are harmful 'habits', or default ways of approaching disability. These habits are commonplace, and usually well intentioned, making them difficult to identify as exclusionary and problematic.

### **These habits include:**

Perfect excuse

Gatekeeping

Cherry picking

Tunnel  
visioning

Babying

This guide will help you identify these habits, offering some actions that will help you disrupt exclusionary thinking in your own practice, organisation, and even personal life.

# What is The Inclusive Code?

The Inclusive Code is a series of tools, co-created to help us overcome barriers to change.

Use this guide to help you think differently about disability in marketing and advertising.

We have identified five common habits (or pitfalls) marketing practitioners encounter when approaching disability in their work.

These habits are commonplace, and usually well intentioned, making them difficult to identify as exclusionary and problematic.

This guide will help you identify these habits along with misconceptions that accompany each, offering some actions that will help you disrupt exclusionary thinking in your own practice, organisation, and even personal life.

Habit: Perfect Excuse Gatekeeping Cherry Picking

Perfect Excuse

Let's get started

Creative Partner SPECIAL Digital Partner NEW TERRITORY

Online Tool

### Plain Language Guide

People understand plain language

Information in plain language is easier and cheaper to translate into alternate formats.

Know your audience.

Use everyday language that readers are familiar with.

Use short, clear sentences (15-20 words).

One idea in a sentence is best.

Keep paragraphs short with one subject in one paragraph.

Avoid using a multi-syllable word when a shorter one will do.

Avoid jargon, acronyms, technical words and details. If you must use an acronym, always provide a full version the first time you mention it.

Use active rather than passive verbs, e.g. "All government agencies signed the Charter" rather than "the Charter was signed by all government agencies".

Use "you" and "we".

Give straightforward instructions, e.g. "please sign this Charter".

Be helpful, human and polite.

It's okay to use bulleted lists.

Use clear print principles

The following information has been reproduced with permission from the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc.

Make body size 12 point type the minimum size recommended for a general audience and 16 point the minimum size recommended for people with vision impairment/low vision, or people with learning disability.

Use a strong sans-serif font, such as Arial.

Avoid highly stylised or simulated handwriting and typefaces.

Typefaces are available in different weights. Avoid light options because there is less contrast between paper and text.

Avoid italics, which can make text difficult to read for some people.

Bold type can be used to emphasise text.

Avoid using all capital letters in words. The human eye reads by recognising the shape of words and a word in all capitals interferes with this recognition.

SPECIAL

Written Report

### Habit 1

## The perfect excuse

'Using the perfect excuse' is the approach of holding yourself to standards so high, you can't reach them. These standards force you to opt out, instead of progressing imperfectly.

How to beat it

### Redefine 'commitment' as consistent steps, not single showstoppers.

Foster long-term relationships with disabled consultants.

Be transparent. Show your limits and set expectations.

Always close the loop on consultation, even when you can't fully implement advice.

Use your voice to share the experts' advice.

SPECIAL the inclusive code

Take-Away Cards

# **The case for inclusivity**

# The industry has significant influence

The industry has considerable power.

Significant money is invested into the dissemination of the important messages to the masses.

With power comes great influence.

The ubiquitousness of marketing efforts, means the industry is one of the major forces influencing societal views, establishing dominant narratives, perceptions and stereotypes.

As an industry we have an obligation to wield this influence responsibly.

# \$3.359 B

Advertising spend in Aotearoa in 2023.

ASA, 2024

# Inclusivity supports relevance

**New Zealand is officially considered 'super diverse'.**

It has the fourth highest proportion of overseas-born residents among the OECD nations. Auckland has been ranked as the fourth most ethnically diverse city in the world. 1 in 5 people are of Māori descent. 1.1 million are aged over 60, and almost 5% are part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

When we're not designing our work with diversity in mind, we risk becoming irrelevant to large parts of society.

Stats NZ, 2023, Ministry of Ethnic Peoples

1 / 4

Of NZ's population born overseas.

Stats NZ, 2020

# Including commonly excluded communities provides major opportunity

Inclusivity is not just a moral imperative, or a 'feel good' action. It provides a major commercial opportunity too. The spending power of underserved communities is considerable:

**\$27.92 T**

**Global spending power of disabled people and their families.**

Purple Goat, 2023

**\$6.489 T**

**Global spending power of LGBTQIA+ community.**

Forbes, 2024

**\$50 M**

**Spending power of Māori in Aotearoa.**

OCG Career Makers, 2023



# Inclusivity improves effectiveness

Evidence from around the world shows embracing inclusivity can improve the effectiveness of advertising across a number of brand health indicators and commercial outcomes.

43%

Higher purchase consideration for brands with progressive advertising.

WARC, 2024

29%

Higher loyalty for brands with progressive advertising.

WARC, 2024

+16%

In long-term sales for brands with progressive advertising.

WARC, 2024

20%

More likely to drive brand choice when adverts feature positive female representation.

IPSOS, 2023

+53

In brand equity when advertising shows under-represented groups in a positive way.

Kantar, 2024

# **Introducing The Inclusive Code**

# **What is The Inclusive Code?**

**A series of tools co-created with marginalised communities.**

**Empowering practitioners to make work that truly connects and represents.**

# How will The Inclusive Code help?

While there is a solid case to create change that make the industry itself, and our outputs more effective, change can feel hard.

People don't have the lived experience, skills, or understanding to know what to do. It can be daunting to dive in.

The Inclusive Code has been created to help people overcome these barriers.

These tools bring together lived experience and sector expertise to get people past initial barriers, toward a path forward.

**I don't have any experience so I can't add value**

**It'll cost too much and take too long to do properly**

**I don't want to get it wrong**

**It doesn't quite fit with the creative vision**

**I'm pretty sure I'm getting it right already...**

# How is The Inclusive Code developed?

## Development approach

### Partners:

Partner with leaders in the focus community to design the approach for creating the resource.

### Collective of contributors:

Bring together a collective of contributors with diverse lived experiences and expertise to shape the content.

### Iterative development:

To centre the guidance of contributors with lived experiences, there is no pre-determined output, this should be shaped by the broader team through the development process.

## Foundation principles

**The approach for developing this resource, was underpinned by four key principles.**

### 'Nothing about us, without us'

- Disabled people with lived-experience should be at the centre of creating the solution.

### A collective of voices

- No single voice can speak for an entire community, guidance should be informed by multiple contributors and perspectives.

### Progress over perfection

- Industry practitioners have competing demands, limited resources and varying levels of knowledge about disability. There is no silver bullet solution that will be universally useful. We set out to create something that would help to keep progressing on their journey.

### More doing, less thinking

- Change happens in action, not in thinking. We wanted to create something people could quickly put into practice, rather than a high level 'thought piece.'

# **Chapter 1 of The Inclusive Code: Disability**

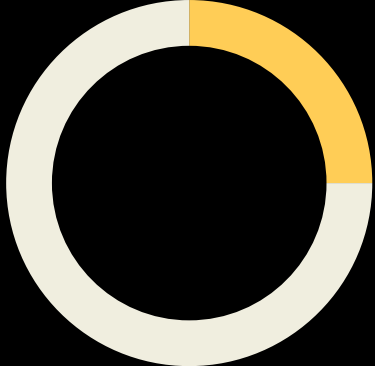
# Chapter 1: Disability

The first chapter of The Inclusive Code focuses on the inclusion of the disabled community.

This focus acknowledges that disabled people make up a quarter of the population, but are underrepresented in our industry with only 8% of practitioners having lived experience with disability.

Better representation of disability in the industry workforce will contribute to more inclusivity — this resource is not a replacement for pursuing that goal — but we hope it will help to bridge the knowledge gap as we work toward that goal. We also believe that elevating knowledge will create a more welcoming workplace that will attract a more diverse workforce.

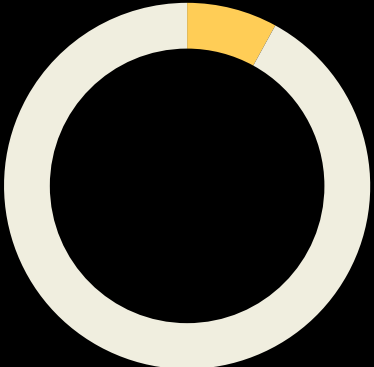
## Underrepresented in the industry



25%

Of New Zealanders have a physical, sensory, learning, mental health or other disability.

Office of Disability Issues, 2023



8%

Of New Zealand's marketing and communications industry have lived experience with disability.

Global DEI Census 2023 Aotearoa Market Report, 2023

# Lead authors

The co-authors of the first chapter resource (disability) are a collective of lived-experience experts and advocates (The Collective).

They bring varied experience and expertise both in terms of disability (lived and advocacy work), and relevant subject matter (advertising and marketing, writing, music, disability training, teaching, and disability role development).



**Pati Umaga**

My name is Fonoti Pati Umaga, I am a musician and an advocate for Pacific and Disabled communities. In 2005 I had a fall that left me with a disability. I received the Queens Service Medal (QSM) in the [2012 New Year Honours](#). In 2016 I travelled to Samoa to receive the matai (Chief) title Fonoti. In 2019 I was the first recipient of [Creative New Zealand's Arts Pasifika Awards](#), Pacific Toa Award and inducted into the Attitude Awards Hall of Fame that same year. I currently work as a Senior Adviser Pacific and Disability at the Crown Response Unit. I am also producing and recording three music projects.



**Grace Stratton**

Grace started All is for All when she was just 19, while studying a Law and Comms Double Degree at AUT. Since then, she's seen All is for All grow from strength to strength. Grace has worked with a wide range of industries – from government agencies to big-name fashion labels – all in the name of creating change. Her work has landed her on some major lists, including InStyle Magazine's Badass 50 in 2019, and Forbes's 30 under 30 in 2021. But for Grace, the biggest highlight so far is seeing All is for All connect so many people with so many new opportunities.



# Co-authors



## Sean Prenter

Sean advocates with his disabled peers as Co-President of the New Zealand National Disabled Students' Association while completing his Masters in Politics, Philosophy and Economics. He has represented New Zealand at the Global Disability Summit 2022, CAMP2030 New York 2023, and as a 2024 Prime Minister's Scholar to India, championing access, inclusion and dignity.



## Hope Cotton

Hope is a Deaf and disabled advocate based in Te Whanganui A Tara Wellington. Hope has been involved in many community advocacy groups. She is currently studying Political Communication and English Literature at Te Herenga Waka. In her free time, you can find her writing poetry or baking.



## Shane McInroe

Shane McInroe is a dedicated advocate for the rights of disabled people and is deeply committed to seeing the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) principles put into practice. As a member of the National Leadership Team for Enabling Good Lives, Shane brings his wealth of experience and passion to the forefront of disability advocacy.



## Thomas Chin

Ngāti Tahu-Ngāti Whaoa

Thomas is a law graduate with Cerebral Palsy. Within his various roles throughout the disability space, he applies a disability lens across industries. Being of Chinese and Māori heritage, Thomas passionately integrates his culture into his work and various other kaupapa.



## Karen Pointon QSM

Ngapuhi Te Iwi  
Ngati Hine Te Hapu  
Ko Karen Pointon toku ingoa.

I am Deaf and use NZSL to communicate. My husband is profoundly Deaf, too. I have a passion to work alongside Tāngata Turi me Tāngata Whaikaha o Aotearoa. I am committed to working in partnership with Māori and disability organisations.



## JG

J is a public servant born with a communication disorder. He holds multiple master's degrees from different New Zealand universities and prefers anonymity.

“I think that, for me, one of the ultimate goals is that we want disabled people to be leading the change rather than being led, which is what has always happened to us in the past. People keep putting their own perspectives on us as to how we should be represented or how we should be portrayed. But I think what [The Inclusive Code] could potentially challenge that”

Fonotī Pati Umaga, ‘The Inclusive Code’ lead author

# Defining disability

Disability is conceptualised in different ways. The most common models include:

- The Medical Model
- The Social Model
- The Human Rights Model

The Social Model says that people are disabled by way that society is constructed — systemic barriers, derogatory barriers or social exclusion — not their body.

The Human Rights Model recognises disability is a natural part of human diversity and that diversity must be respected and supported in all its forms.

The Inclusive Code subscribes to the Social Model of Disability and the Human Rights Model, therefore we use the term 'disabled people' throughout. We acknowledge some people prefer other terminology.

## Medical Model

Where disability is a disease or defect within an individual.

## Social Model

Where disability is a socially constructed phenomenon.

## Human Rights Model

Where disability is a normal part of human diversity.

# The issue: Lack of visibility

International figures show extremely low levels of visibility of disability in advertising with only 1% of primetime ads featuring disabled people.

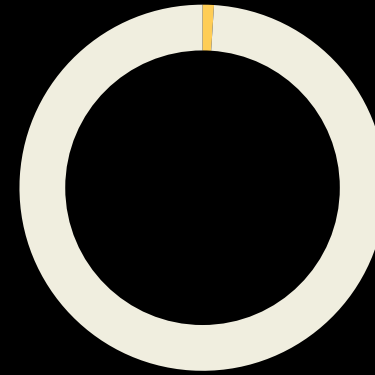
A lack of visibility fuels societal ignorance through a lack of exposure of disabled people, their culture, and the diversity of disability.

Advertisers are hesitant to include disabled people in their advertisements out of a fear of getting it wrong and harming both disabled communities and their own brand image. It can be seen as timely, and labour intensive, involving processes that they're unfamiliar with.

Despite this, within the broader public, we see a desire for change, 75% of people believe that level of visibility is not good enough.

AANA 2023, Forbes 2021

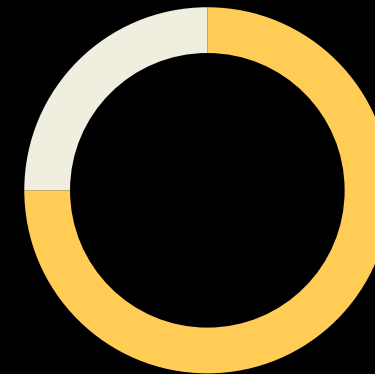
## Underrepresented in the industry



# 1%

**Of primetime ads  
feature disabled people.**

Nielsen, 2021



# 75%

**Of people think representation  
of disabled people in  
advertising is not good enough.**

Dylan Alcott Foundation X TRA, 2024

# The issue: Misrepresentation

Even when disabled people are visible, the disabled experience is often misrepresented.

Misrepresentations, stem from some common issues:

## **Limited definition of disability**

Casting is commonly restricted to visible disabilities and for products and services targeted at disabled communities, these are frequently health or personal care categories, namely pharmaceuticals.

Nielson, 2021

## **Tick box representation**

Disabled people's involvement can be approached as a tick box activity, rather than a genuine commitment towards better outcomes. This results in the bare minimum and leaves disabled individuals feeling like they're being used as props in ads, rather than being empowered to authentically represent the communities they belong to.

Reynolds, 2022

## **Uninformed narratives**

Depictions of disability are commonly done through the lens of non-disabled people. Disabled people are cast, rather than consulted in the ad-making process. This results in advertisements that rely on uninformed narratives and perpetuate assumptions of non-disabled.

Unilever, 2023

# The issue: Misrepresentation (stereotypes)

**Stereotypes that misrepresent the disabled experience reinforce problematic perceptions. Common ones include:**

**The villain** is led astray by their disability-related suffering, often with a mental illness and tendency for violence.

**The hero** is portrayed as an extraordinary talent 'despite' their disability.

**The victim** is commonly used to evoke sympathy (e.g. charities seeking donations) They are portrayed as helpless and need to be "saved".

**The butt-of-the-joke** is when disabled people are used as entertainment for non-disabled. They are made fun of in a way that results in people laughing at them, not with them.

Lastly, **the innocent**, is where disabled people are shown as naive, sweet, angelic and childlike, often to expose the flaws of a non-disabled character and play into the storyline of redemption, making disabled people feel more like a prop. It is patronising, makes disabled people look vulnerable; perpetuating a desire to 'protect' them.

Aruma, 2019; Timke, 2019; Bauer, 2005; Kartchner, 2021

## Stereotyping

The hero, villain, angel, victim, innocent, or butt-of-the-joke.

Timke, 2019

## Inspiration porn

Exceptional stories for non-disabled.

Holland et al., 2023

## Neglect of intersectionality

Focusing on disability as the whole person.

JustCopy, 2022

## Medicalisation

Seeing a disability as a disease to be cured.

Khan, 2022

# The issue: Misrepresentation (limited narratives)

Misrepresentation also stems from limited narratives, common ones include:

**‘Inspiration Porn’**, a phenomenon where a disabled person becomes a tool for inspiring those without disabilities.

**Neglect of intersectionality** reduces identities down to one thing, framing disability as the whole of a person. This narrow-minded view does not capture the complexities of individuals or the different communities they identify with.

Reducing people solely to their disabilities creates societal barriers, emphasising the disability over the person and hindering a holistic view of their identity. It also neglects to recognise the struggles they may face being a part of several underserved communities.

**Medicalisation**, is a medical lens that depicts disability as something that needs to be fixed or cured. This approach, coinciding with the neglect of intersectionality, further reduces a disabled person's identity to their condition. It also presents disability as a negative aspect of their identity, or a problem, and positions non-disabled as superior, creating a divide and generating societal pity.

Just Copy, 2022; Khan, 2012; Office for Disability Issues, 2023

## Stereotyping

The hero, villain, angel, victim, innocent, or butt-of-the-joke.

Timke, 2019

## Inspiration porn

Exceptional stories for non-disabled.

Holland et al., 2023

## Neglect of intersectionality

Focusing on disability as the whole person.

JustCopy, 2022

## Medicalisation

Seeing a disability as a disease to be cured.

Khan, 2022



“I had such a big expectation on me because all the disabled people I saw in the media were either “so sad, don't be them” or like, “I’m so angelic and inspirational and perfect”. I felt like that in order to be worthy of any kind of love or affection, I had to be perfect. I put so much pressure on myself and that validation that my mental health got really bad. I just felt like I couldn't be human and acknowledged for my worth, unless I was this perfect person that was never a burden. I had never met other disabled people. So, I just put all the stereotypes I saw on the TV onto myself. I think it’s really important for disabled people to see themselves in the media for it to be good representation and a positive representation.”

Hope, ‘The Inclusive Code’ co-author



# The issue:

## Poor accessibility (standards)

**Beyond the problems with portrayal there is one fundamental human right that is not being met by a significant portion of advertising; accessibility.**

Approximately a fifth of New Zealand's population has difficulty accessing media content. This means a substantial proportion of advertising fails to reach or doesn't effectively engage d/Deaf and disabled people, contributing to societal inequity.

Although there are some existing standards, they are not being activated in a satisfactory way, they are not specific to the industry, they are fragmented and they are largely forgotten. Activist groups and industry bodies have developed guidelines, but there is no one-stop shop for practitioners to find everything they need to ensure they are appropriately meeting accessibility standards.

Able, 2023

Lack of  
Standards

NZSL Video  
Interpretation

Captions

Text  
Presentation

Plain Language

# The issue:

## Poor accessibility (language options)

Often information is not provided in different formats that consider different needs and preferences, for example, some useful options include:

**NZSL video interpretation** is where sign language translation for both pre-recorded and live videos is provided. This is crucial because English is often not the first language of d/Deaf individuals, meaning that reading captions demands additional effort. This creates further inequity and potential harm for d/Deaf people, especially when communicating high-stake and emergency information.

**Captioning on videos** displays text on videos that narrate spoken words and other meaningful sounds. There are specific guidelines for captioning videos that need to be considered so that it is a positive experience for those who rely on captions. This includes synchronisation of captions, web accessibility standards, open or closed caption, and thinking about what is considered a 'meaningful sound'.

New Zealand Government, 2022

Lack of  
Standards

NZSL Video  
Interpretation

Captions

Text  
Presentation

Plain Language

# The issue:

## Poor accessibility (presentation styles)

How information is presented impacts how disabled people (often those with learning disabilities or people who are hard of hearing and d/Deaf) can process the information effectively.

There are two main ways of presenting information to consider:

Making things easy to read.

Things such as; avoiding the use of all capital letters, breaking text down into short sentences, reducing the amount of text used, using a minimum of 14pt for fonts and avoiding italics or linking fonts can make information easier to process. There are some existing guidelines that are worth reviewing but it's important to consider your specific communication task in their application (e.g. signage font size, vs. document fonts size).

Using Plain Language.

Plain Language guidance includes simplifying language and giving an explanation to important words or terms.

Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, 2023

Lack of  
Standards

NZSL Video  
Interpretation

Captions

Text  
Presentation

Plain Language

“It is an equal right of a person to be able to access media like everyone else and be treated the same way. New Zealand media is excluding an entire community. Hearing loss is isolating enough in itself. We feel a disconnection from society already...”

Natasha Gallardo, CEO for The National Foundation for the Deaf

# **The Inclusive Code: 5 habits to break**

# How to use this guide

**This guide is...**  
**A way of thinking**

This guide is a tool to help you think differently about disability in marketing and advertising.

It is our hope that it will help you peel away some dated modes of thinking that have been inherited and start you on the journey of creating a more inclusive industry to pass on to the next generation.

**This guide is not...**  
**A formula**

This is not a a step-by-step recipe for inclusion. We wish we could create that, but inclusion is a living, breathing practice. It can't live only as a set of rules, it must also live in our hearts and minds.

We hope you come to this guide with curiosity, that the ideas shared stick with you, and that you can bring them to life in your work. That is the only way they will have any meaning at all.

# Five habits to break

We have identified five common pitfalls marketing practitioners encounter when approaching disability in their work.

These ways of operating are commonplace, and usually well intentioned, making them difficult to identify as exclusionary, difficult to call out as problematic, and ultimately, difficult to replace with more inclusive practices.

In this guide, we will help you identify these habits, shine a light on the common misconceptions that accompany these habits, and offer some provocations that will help you disrupt exclusionary thinking in your own practice, in your organisations, and even in your own personal life.

**Perfect excuse**

**Gatekeeping**

**Cherry picking**

**Tunnel  
visioning**

**Babying**

# Habit 1: The perfect excuse



# Habit 1: The perfect excuse

## **What it is:**

Using the 'Perfect Excuse' is the approach of holding yourself to standards so high, you can't reach them. These standards force you to opt out, instead of progressing imperfectly.

## **Why it matters:**

Much of the change that happens in organisations happens by doing, not talking. Taking steps, whatever we can, provides tangible proof, short-term encouragement, and increased confidence to keep going. If we wait to be well-resourced experts before we begin, we slow down progress.

**How to beat it...**

## Habit 1: The perfect excuse

# Misconception:

**‘We don’t have the resources to do it properly, and we don’t want to undercook it.’**

## Reality:

There is opportunity for engagement in any project regardless of time and budget. The key is in nurturing enduring relationships with disabled partners and in demonstrating long-term commitment to transitioning to more inclusive practices.

With this backdrop, engagements on certain jobs can be light-touch and brief without being tokenistic and transactional. Additionally, you can be transparent about your constraints without being ‘undercooked’.

## Action:

Approach inclusive practices as small, consistent actions, versus one off major initiatives.

**Habit 1: The perfect excuse**

# Misconception:

**‘It’s better to leave it to the experts.’**

## **Reality:**

Building capability in creating more inclusive work is valuable for all advertising practitioners by keeping your way of working current and effective.

People often feel uncomfortable championing disability when they’re not an expert, but the experts rely on others working in the industry to support their whakaaro.

Think of a topic you often speak about in your work that you’re not a published expert in e.g. marketing effectiveness. If you chose to never speak about it, how would this negatively impact the work or your organisation?

## **Action:**

Even if you aren’t an expert, use your influence to represent their wisdom.

**Habit 1: The perfect excuse**

# Misconception:

**‘You’ll burn bridges with consultants if you don’t implement their advice fully.’**

## **Reality:**

There are many competing demands on projects. Disabled consultants are aware of the constraints if they have been fully engaged on the project. It is more important to explain to your partners what advice has and hasn't been acted on, and why some advice hasn't been acted on, than try to hide it.

## **Action:**

Always ‘close the loop’. Set expectations at the outset of your limitations and be transparent about what has and hasn’t been included.

# Habit 2: Gatekeeping

# Habit 2: Gatekeeping

## **What it is:**

‘Gatekeeping’ is when people downplay what ‘accessibility’ means, when accessibility should be considered, and to what extent it should be applied.

Typically, this results in accessibility standards being re-defined as ‘well-designed’ and ‘simple’ or only being fully applied when it is mandated e.g when it is a legal requirement.

## **Why it matters:**

‘Gatekeeping’ means disabled people have their information filtered for them by default. For organisations trying to communicate, it means their messages aren’t always getting through effectively.

# How to beat it...



## Habit 2: Gatekeeping

# Misconception:

**‘Accessibility is an added extra investment that is only required when you’re specifically targeting disabled people.’**

## Reality:

Making communications accessible for disabled people benefits everyone. Most accessibility requirements are simple and easily manageable from the start (e.g. avoiding all caps or using accessible colour combinations).

Costs arise only when accessibility is an afterthought, leading to last-minute changes and additional versions.

## Action:

Add a simple ‘accessibility’ guide as part of all project kick-offs.

## Habit 2: Gatekeeping

# Misconception:

**‘Beautiful, well-crafted design transcends disabilities.’**

## Reality:

What is currently considered ‘well-crafted design’ doesn’t always consider the way disabled people process information.

Colours need to be high contrast, all caps and italics can be difficult to read, and minimum pt. size recommendations are often too small.

## Action:

Redefine ‘well-crafted design’ to include accessibility standards. Find the guide [here](#).

## Habit 2: Gatekeeping

# Misconception:

**‘Plain, simple, well-written English will be understood by the majority of English speakers.’**

## Reality:

People with learning disabilities, low levels of literacy, English language learners, d/Deaf and some older people can find standard written information difficult to process.

Easy Read is a way of communicating information using straightforward language, clear sentence structure, and supporting pictures.

## Action:

Consider translating your text into Easy Read. Find a guide [here](#).

## Habit 2: Gatekeeping

# Misconception:

**‘Having written language is enough for Deaf communities.’**

## Reality:

NZ Sign Language is the natural language of our d/Deaf community, meaning it is their first language before English. As with all language, NZSL has embedded within the language many aspects of d/Deaf culture.

Expecting Deaf people to communicate in written English can be equivalent to them communicating in a second language.

## Action:

If it's for all of Aotearoa, say it in New Zealand Sign Language. If you want to make written language more accessible to the d/Deaf community, consider writing the translations as simply as possible.

## Habit 2: Gatekeeping

# Misconception:

**‘Hashtags and emojis are a way to add meaning for everyone.’**

## Reality:

People with low vision typically use screen readers. Both Hashtags and Emojis can cause issues for screen readers.

For example, emojis when used inline read like this:

Moving day [house with garden][grinning face with smiling eyes] check out my new [dog face] neighbour [face with stuck-out tongue and squinting eyes][smiling face with heart eyes].

## Action:

Limit emoji and hashtag use in captions. Avoid using them in a sentence to replace a word. If they're included, use them at the end of the caption in limited numbers.

## Habit 2: Gatekeeping

# Misconception:

**‘Content warnings are for the content of communications, not the style.’**

## Reality:

If there are a lot of flashing or quick changing clips, this could trigger someone with epilepsy, so a trigger warning might be warranted.

## Action:

Add content warnings on flashing or fast-changing clips.

Imagine you have a seizure because someone failed to label the flashing in their ad?

# Habit 3: Cherry picking

# Habit 3: Cherry picking

## **What is is:**

‘Cherry picking’ is the act of selectively engaging with disability only in ways that are comfortable.

This might look like only asking for consultation from experts who ‘get it’ (e.g. those that agree with you) or including disabled characters, but only as ‘side-kicks’.

## **Why it matters:**

‘Cherry picking’ masquerades as progressing efforts to improve disability inclusion but ultimately maintains the status quo.

When non-disabled people decide what disabled voices are heard, this centers non-disabled perspectives, ultimately making them the curators of disabled narratives.

Selective depictions reinforce the same limiting stories about disability.



**How to beat it...**

### Habit 3: Cherry picking

## Misconception:

**‘Including disabled people as main characters is only important when they’re our target audience.’**

### Reality:

Representing disabled people is often overlooked unless we’re promoting products and services specifically for the disabled community. When included, it’s often used as a ‘prop’ for main characters (e.g. showing how caring they are).

Disabled people consume all things that non-disabled people do, like clothing, food, transport etc. We don’t need to wait until we’re advertising disability-specific products to include disabled people.

### Action:

Try considering disability even when you don’t think you have a ‘reason’.

### Habit 3: Cherry picking

## Misconception:

**‘As long as someone from the disabled community gives positive feedback, we’re good.’**

### **Reality:**

Lived-experience does not automatically prepare someone to provide guidance.

Consultants need a range of skills to appropriately consult on ways to connect with and represent the disabled community as a whole.

Imagine you’re the only woman in a meeting where people are debating whether a concept is feminist or not. People ask you to decide and your opinion will be used as the sole evidence for proceeding.

### **Action:**

Work with experts who have lived experience, technical expertise, and are connected into the communities they are speaking for.

### Habit 3: Cherry picking

## Misconception:

**‘Testing with disabled audiences is the best way to check your work is inclusive.’**

### **Reality:**

Testing gives us clues, not advice. Gathering insight from clues gained from a sub-culture often needs someone with lived-experience to be able to decipher them.

### **Action:**

Plan a couple of ‘check-ins’ in your process, rather than a test at the end.

If someone asks your opinion once the work is 90% complete, the client is sold, and the deadline is approaching fast. Can you really make change?

### Habit 3: Cherry picking

## Misconception:

**'If a disabled person is included on the team, they'll make sure we're inclusive.'**

### Reality:

As with any kind of collaboration, the environment has a huge impact on the outputs. Consultants are often unable to meaningfully contribute because the environment itself is not accessible, or other team members do not have the skills required to effectively collaborate with disabled contributors.

### Action:

Make a disability collaboration plan that includes the environment needed, and the pre-work required from all team members.

Find a guide to disability etiquette [here](#).

# Habit 4: Tunnel visioning

# Habit 4: Tunnel visioning

## **What is is:**

'Tunnel Visioning' is the act of seeing the experience of disability in a narrow way.

This includes:

- Seeing disability as the defining aspect of a disabled person's identity, rather than seeing them as a multi-faceted person.
- Seeing disability primarily as a physical disability.
- Seeing disability as a negative experience to overcome, or ideally, cure.

## **Why it matters:**

When we see disability through this narrow lens, we create communications that do not reflect the reality of many disabled people's experience and perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

# How to beat it...



#### Habit 4: Tunnel visioning

## Misconception:

**'Most disabled people would prefer to not be disabled.'**

#### **Reality:**

Many disabled people would choose to keep their disability if presented with the choice.

Disabled people experience the world differently, this shapes their skills, interests, sense of identity, and perspectives, often in positive ways. Their diverse and nuanced insights and experiences challenge conventional narratives and fuel innovation, enriching society on a greater level.

#### **Action:**

Imagine the lights have gone out and it is pitch black. Who can 'see', you or the blind person?

Think about the benefits of being disabled and how you might utilise or represent these strengths in your work.

#### Habit 4: Tunnel visioning

## Misconception:

**‘Being disabled, is the experience of ‘missing’ an ability.’**

#### **Reality:**

Disabled people are dis-abled by the barriers that have been designed into the world around them, not by themselves. If the world was designed to be inclusive, disabled people could operate with ease.

#### **Action:**

Think about how you might do things differently if inclusivity was the baseline, not a bolt-on.

Imagine it’s announced that from tomorrow, no advertising will be permitted to have sound or colour on any channel. How would this change the way you design your campaigns?

## Habit 4: Tunnel visioning

# Misconception:

**‘Having a disability would define your experience of life.’**

## Reality:

A disability is just one part of a person’s identity. Disabled people are multi-dimensional, and the other aspects of their identity influence how they experience their disability.

Imagine you’re reviewing a customer persona and the only characteristic included is age. How might this limit your ability to effectively design solutions for this customer group?

## Action:

When considering disabled people, consider the other aspects of their identity that shape who they are.

#### Habit 4: Tunnel visioning

## Misconception:

**'We have disabled representation by casting <someone with a physical disability>.'**

#### **Reality:**

Disabilities can manifest in a multitude of ways including cognitive, emotional, sensory, and physical variations. Showing limited depictions of disability can contribute to a lack of awareness and sense of invisibility.

#### **Action:**

Champion the diversity of disabled experiences. Full list of impairments available [here](#).

# Habit 5: Babying

# Habit 5: Babying

## **What is is:**

'Babying' is approaching disabled people as needing non-disabled people to help or communicate for them.

## **Why it matters:**

While well intentioned, acting in ways that appear virtuous can disempower, suggests inferiority, and contribute to 'othering' disabled people.

**How to beat it...**

## Habit 5: Babying

# Misconception:

**‘A story that paints a disabled person as exceptional and inspirational is positive representation.’**

## Reality:

When championing disabled people as inspirational simply for completing daily life, we put them in the category of ‘other’ and make their entire story about overcoming disability.

Imagine you’re not a morning person, but every time you get up early people congratulate you for it. How does it make you feel?

## Action:

Redefine disabled achievement by letting disabled people tell you what is worth celebrating.



## Habit 5: Babying

# Misconception:

**‘Showing people proud and embracing their disability is empowering to disabled people.’**

## Reality:

Everyone relates to their disability differently. For some people, their disability is core to their sense of identity, for others, it is not a defining factor at all.

Imagine everyone only ever praises you for one part of your life — a part that isn’t particularly important to you. How might this feel limiting?

## Action:

Think of disabled people as multi-faceted people. Find at least three aspects beyond disability to understand them.

## Habit 5: Babying

# Misconception:

**‘Being involved in inclusivity work is rewarding in itself for disabled people.’**

## Reality:

Disabled people are often invited to consult on projects for free, with their input alone considered sufficient compensation. Additionally, consultation is often shallow, seeking early endorsement rather than support to deliver an inclusive end result.

Imagine being asked for your casual comments on a project about to start and you say it sounds like a good project. A few months later you see an end-result that does not resemble early concepts and you’re listed as a consultant.

## Action:

Articulate and agree on the partnership arrangement with disabled consultants.

Remunerate, reciprocate value, and give credit where it is due.

# Five actions we can take

**Redefine  
commitment  
as consistent  
steps.**

**Raise your  
accessibility  
standards.**

**Create the  
conditions  
for  
collaboration  
of all shapes  
and sizes.**

**Tell a new  
story about  
disability.**

**Respect the  
value that  
disabled  
perspectives  
delivers.**

# Five Key Takeaways

1

Doing better, sometimes feels bad. Challenging the status quo rarely feels good or easy in the moment. Awkwardness is a sign you're in unfamiliar territory. Use this feeling as evidence of learning.

2

Don't let getting it wrong discourage you. We won't always get it right, and often we won't feel we are doing enough. Mistakes are inevitable. Being called out is important. If you're not making them, you're not trying.

3

It's okay to start small (just start). While kōrero and education are important steps to take to become more inclusive, to make a difference we need to implement learnings, no matter how small. These things have a way of snowballing. Begin and keep rolling.

4

Threats to inclusivity hide everywhere. The industry is littered with barriers to inclusivity. Meeting culture, physical spaces, ways of socialising. Give yourself a challenge of noting them as you go.

5

It will broaden your view more than you might think. You might be surprised by how many opportunities you see in the world after spending some time looking at it through a different lens.

**Ngā Mīhi**

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# Thank you to those that have been 'all in' on inclusivity





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# Accessibility Standards Guide



## General

---

All use of sign language should be NZSL.

---

Plain language guidance should be applied across the board in comms. Check out this guide from MSD. [click here](#)

---

On websites and social media, include image descriptions. These can be included as alt text and as descriptions in your captions.

---

All-Caps comms are harder for the human eye to discern. Prioritise using sentence-casing or title-casing as appropriate.

---

## Copy

---

Plain language guidance should be applied across the board in comms. Check out this guide from MSD. [click here](#)

---

On social, hashtags should be placed at the end of the caption and not used inline, as they cause disruptions for screen readers.

---

Avoid using too many hashtags on one post, as this can make the post difficult to read.

---

Limit emoji use in the caption and avoid using emojis in a sentence to replace a word. Screen readers are not good at picking these up. Try to include emojis at the end of the caption in limited numbers.

---

## Design/Creative

---

Plan to incorporate braille wherever appropriate in physical comms. Simplified English (e.g. Easy-read) text translation should also be considered for long-form pieces of content, or those especially intended for English language learners, Deaf individuals or older people. [click here](#)

---

Colour should meet accessibility standards, especially in digital environments. Aim for high contrast between text and background, where possible avoid important copy content on patterned or busy backgrounds.

---

Colour usage should not be relied on to convey key details. This creates barriers to access for colourblind individuals.

---

# Accessibility Standards Guide Cont.



Typography should be set a a size which considers those that have vision impairments. Some typefaces are more readable than others, consider this when choosing an appropriate typeface (e.g. does it have distinct numerals?)

---

Avoid italics, instead consider using bold to emphasise.

---

Where possible, include an audio description for visual information.

---

On websites and social media, include image descriptions. These can be added as 'alt text' and as descriptions in your captions. You can add alt text in the settings section of most platforms. Keep descriptions clear and short.

---

Using colour alone to convey key details can create barriers for colourblind individuals. Support colour usage with other elements to highlight or differentiate key points.

---

## Video

---

Captions on moving content should be included wherever possible. Be mindful that auto-generated captions are not reliable for the Kiwi accent. Creatively explore how captions can enhance the work, they don't always need to be displayed as a strip at the bottom of content.

---

Captions should always be visible, using white text on black background if necessary.

---

Captions are included to support people to understand content. Ensure the placement of captions doesn't interfere with people's ability to see key visual components of the video.

---

Keep in mind the need to add any trigger warnings, i.e. if there are lots of flashing or quickly changing clips, this could trigger someone with epilepsy. Consider when a trigger warning might be warranted.

---

NZSL video interpretation should be made available for both pre-recorded and live video.

---

All use of sign language should be NZSL.

---

# Disability Etiquette Guide



Disability etiquette is a set of guidelines dealing specifically with how to approach disabled people. The rules of etiquette and good manners for interacting with disabled people are generally the same as the rules for good etiquette in society.

---

The following rules focus on specific issues which frequently arise for disabled people with different kinds of impairments. Practical tips are provided to assist you in your relationship with a disabled person.

---

## The language about disability

---

There are many words and terms that are used to identify disability. The way these are understood differs, for some of us, the term, “disabled people”, is a source of pride, identity and recognition that disabling barriers exist within society and not within us as individuals. For others, the term, “people with disability”, has the same meaning and is important to those who want to be recognised as a person before their disability.

---

The current consensus, based on advice from the New Zealand Disability Strategy Revision Reference Group, is “disabled people”.

---

In future, it is possible the disability community will decide to revise the way to describe themselves. If this happens, the language can be changed to reflect this. Not all members of the disability community identify with disability-focused language:

---

- Older people and their families and whānau sometimes think that disability is a normal part of the ageing process.
  - People with invisible impairments such as mental health issues can sometimes identify as part of the mental health community, and not the disability community.
  - Deaf people who identify as part of the Deaf community understand themselves as having their own unique language and culture, and do not always identify as being disabled. (A capital D rather than a lower case d in “Deaf” is used to convey this.)
  - Most Māori disabled people identify as Māori first. The importance of their cultural identity, which encompasses language, whānau, cultural principles, practices and linkages to the land through genealogy, is paramount to how they live their day to day lives in both Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pakeha.
-



# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



We know non-disabled people are sometimes not sure which words or terms to use in order to be respectful. It is advisable to listen to how disabled people refer to themselves and use the same language. If you are still not sure, then just ask what language disabled people prefer

---

## The basics

---

The basic principle is to put the person before the impairment.

---

## Ask before you help

---

Just because someone has an impairment, don't assume they need help. Disabled adults want to be treated as independent people.

---

Offer assistance only if the person appears to need it.

---

If they do want help, just ask how, before you act.

---

Remember to be sensitive about physical contact.

---

## Think before you speak

---

Always speak directly to the disabled person, not to their companion, aide or sign language interpreter.

---

Respect their privacy.

---

If you ask about their disability, they may feel like you are treating them as a disability and not as a person.

---

## Don't make assumptions

---

Disabled people are the best judge of what they can or cannot do. Don't make presumptions about people's perceived limitations.

---

Never ask "What happened to you?"

---

Respond graciously to requests.

---

# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



## People who are mobility impaired

---

People who are mobility impaired include people with varying types of physical impairments. People with mobility impairments often use assistive devices or mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, canes and artificial limbs to aid in mobility.

---

Wheelchair users are people, not equipment.

---

Never patronise wheelchair users by patting them on the head or shoulder.

---

When speaking to a person using a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.

---

Don't push or touch a person's wheelchair; it's part of their personal space. If you help someone down a curb without waiting for instructions, you may dump them out of their chair. You may detach the chair's parts if you lift it by the handles or the footrest.

---

Keep the ramps and wheelchair-accessible doors to your building unlocked and unblocked. Displays should not be in front of entrances; rubbish bins should not be in the middle of aisles and boxes should not be stored on ramps.

---

Be aware of wheelchair users' reach limits. Place as many items as possible within their grasp. And make sure there is a clear path of travel to shelves and display racks. When talking to a wheelchair user, grab your own chair and sit at their level. If that's not possible, stand at a slight distance, so they aren't straining their neck to make eye contact with you.

---

If the service counter at your place of business is too high for a wheelchair user to see over, step around it to provide service. Have a clipboard handy if filling in forms or providing signatures is expected.

---

If your building has different routes through it, be sure your signs direct wheelchair users to the most accessible ways around the facility. People who walk with a cane or crutches also need to know the easiest way to get around a place, but stairs may be easier for them than a ramp. Ensure security guards and receptionists can answer questions about the most accessible way around the building and grounds.

---

# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



If the nearest public toilet is not accessible or is located on an inaccessible floor, allow the person in a wheelchair to use a private or employees' accessible toilet.

---

People who use canes or crutches need their arms to balance themselves, so never grab them. People who are mobility-impaired may lean on a door for support as they open it. Pushing the door open from behind or unexpectedly opening the door may cause them to fall. Even pulling out or pushing in a chair may present a problem. Always ask before offering help.

---

If you offer a seat to a person who is mobility-impaired, keep in mind that chairs with arms or with higher seats are easier for some people to use.

---

Falls may be a problem for people with mobility impairments. Be sure to set out adequate warning signs if the floor is wet. Also, put out mats on rainy or snowy days to keep the floors as dry as possible.

---

People who are not visibly mobility-impaired may have needs related to their mobility. For example, a person with a respiratory or heart condition may have trouble walking long distances or walking quickly. Be sure work areas and workstations have ample seating for people to sit and rest.

---

Some people have limited use of their hands, wrists or arms. Be prepared to offer assistance with reaching for, grasping or lifting objects, opening doors etc.

---

## **People who are visually impaired or blind**

---

People who are blind know how to orient themselves and get around on the street. They are competent to travel unassisted, though they may use a cane or a guide dog. A person may have a visual impairment that is not obvious. Be prepared to offer assistance - for example in reading - when asked.

---

Identify yourself before you make physical contact with a person who is blind. Tell them your name - and your role if it's appropriate, such as security guard, case manager, receptionist, employment coordinator, work broker. And be sure to introduce them to others who are in the group, so they are not excluded.

---



# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



It is helpful to call them by name or touch them gently on the arm, when addressing a person who is blind.

---

If a new employee is blind or visually impaired, offer them a tour of your workplace.

---

People who are blind need their arms for balance, so offer your arm - don't take theirs - if they need to be guided. However, it is appropriate to guide a blind person's hand to a banister or the back of a chair to help direct them to a stairway or a seat.

---

If the person has a guide dog, walk on the side opposite the dog. As you are walking, describe the setting, noting any obstacles, such as stairs ("up" or "down") or a big crack in the footpath. Other hazards include: half-opened doors, desks or plants. If you are going to give a warning, be specific, "Look out!" does not tell the person if they should stop, run, duck or jump.

---

If you are giving directions, give specific, non-visual information. Rather than say, "Go to your right when you reach the office supplies," which assumes the person knows where the office supplies are, say, "Walk forward to the end of this aisle and make a full right."

---

If you need to leave a person who is blind, inform them first and let them know where the exit is, then leave them near a wall, table, or some other landmark. The middle of a room will seem like the middle of nowhere to them.

---

Don't touch the person's cane or guide dog. The dog is working and needs to concentrate. The cane is part of the individual's personal space. If the person puts the cane down, don't move it. Let them know if it's in the way.

---

Offer to read written information - such as the forms to customers who are blind.

---

A person who is visually impaired may need written material in large print. A clear font with appropriate spacing is just as important as type size. Labels and signs should be lettered in contrasting colours. It is easiest for people with vision impairments to read bold white letters on a black background.

---

# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



Good lighting is important, but it shouldn't be too bright. In fact, very shiny paper or walls can produce a glare that disturbs people's eyes.

---

Keep walkways clear of obstructions. If people who are blind or visually impaired are regular clients, inform them about any physical changes, such as rearranged furniture, equipment or other items that have been moved.

---

Don't worry about using words such as "see" or "look" in a conversation. These words are a part of everyday conversation and are not considered offensive.

---

## **People who are hard of hearing or Deaf**

---

The term, "hard of hearing", is often used to describe people with any degree of hearing loss, from mild to profound, including those who are deaf and those who are hard of hearing.

---

As already stated, Deaf people who identify as part of the Deaf community understand themselves as having their own unique language and culture, and do not always identify as disabled. All people who use New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) identify themselves as being Deaf.

---

NZSL is an entirely different language from English, with its own syntax. Speech reading (lip reading) is difficult for people who are deaf if their first language is sign language, because the majority of sounds in English are formed inside the mouth, and it's hard to speech read a second language.

---

People who are hard of hearing, however, communicate in English. They use some hearing but may rely on amplification and/or seeing the speaker's lips to communicate effectively.

---

To facilitate lip reading, face into the light and keep your hands and other objects away from your mouth. Don't turn your back or walk about while talking. If you look or move away, the person might assume that the conversation is over.

---

There is a range of communication preferences and styles among people with hearing loss that cannot be explained in this brief space. It is helpful to note that the majority of late deafened adults do not communicate with sign language and use English. They may be candidates for writing and assistive listening devices to help improve communication.

---

# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



People with cochlear implants, like other people with hearing impairments, will usually inform you what works best for them.

---

When the exchange of information is complex, the most effective way to communicate with a native signer is through a qualified sign language interpreter. For a simple interaction writing back and forth is usually okay.

---

Follow the person's cues to find out if they prefer sign language, gesturing, writing or speaking. If you have trouble understanding the speech of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, let them know.

---

When using a sign language interpreter, look directly at the person who is deaf, and maintain eye contact to be polite. Talk directly to the person ("What would you like?"), rather than to the interpreter ("Ask them what they'd like.").

---

People who are deaf need to be included in the decision-making process on issues that affect them; don't decide for them.

---

Before speaking to a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, make sure you get their attention. Depending on the situation, you can extend your arm and wave your hand, tap their shoulder.

---

Rephrase, rather than repeat, sentences the person doesn't understand.

---

Speak clearly. Most people who are hard of hearing count on watching people's lips as they speak to help them understand. Avoid obscuring your mouth with your hand while speaking.

---

There is no need to shout at a person who is deaf or hard of hearing. If the person uses a hearing aid, it will be calibrated to normal voice levels; your shout will just sound distorted.

---

People who are deaf (and some who are hard of hearing or have speech impairments) make and receive telephone calls with the assistance of a device called a TTY (short for teletypewriter). A TTY is a small device with a keyboard, a paper printer or a visual display screen and acoustic couplers (for the telephone receiver).

---



# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



## People with speech impairments

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A person, who has had a stroke, is severely hard of hearing, uses voice prosthesis or has a stammer or other type of speech impairment may be difficult to understand.

---

Give the person your full, unhurried attention and speak in your regular tone of voice. Don't interrupt or finish the person's sentences. If you have trouble understanding, don't nod. Just ask them to repeat. In most cases the person won't mind and will appreciate your effort to hear what they have to say.

---

If you are not sure whether you have understood, you can repeat for verification.

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If, after trying, you still cannot understand the person, ask them to write it down or to suggest another way of facilitating communication.

---

Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting.

---

A quiet environment makes communication easier.

---

## People with cognitive impairments (learning disability)

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People with cognitive impairments have difficulty remembering, learning new things, concentrating or making decisions that affect their everyday life. Cognitive impairments range from mild to severe.

---

Use language that is concrete rather than abstract. Be specific, without being simplistic.

---

Repeat information, using different wording. Allow time for the information to be fully understood.

---

People may respond slowly in conversation. Be patient, flexible and supportive.

---

Some people with cognitive impairments may be easily distracted. Try to redirect politely.

---

People with brain injuries may have short-term memory difficulties and may repeat themselves or require information to be repeated.

---

# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



People with auditory perceptual difficulties may need to have directions repeated, and may take notes to help them remember directions or the sequence of a task.

---

People who experience “sensory overload” may become disorientated or confused if there is too much to absorb at once. Provide information gradually and clearly. Reduce background noise, if possible.

---

## People with autism spectrum disorder

---

Autism or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) refers to a range of conditions characterised by challenges with social skills, behaviour, verbal and nonverbal communication. The word, “spectrum”, refers to a wide range of differences people with ASD can have. Signs and symptoms vary with age and can also vary over time. ASD can be mild, moderate or severe.

---

Given that most people with autism experience difficulty processing everyday sensory information, it is helpful to minimise non-essential sensory input to create a safer sensory environment and facilitate communication:

---

– Loud noises should be avoided.

---

– Fluorescent and flashing lighting can cause severe sensory overload, so natural light or soft incandescent lighting is better.

---

Large groups can be over-stimulating or overwhelming; it can be challenging to understand the social nuances of such groups. Small groups in quiet rooms are the better option for meaningful communication.

---

People with ASD communicate in different ways, from spoken words to writing to gestures and sounds. It is important to respect these diverse forms of communication.

---

Do not insist on eye contact which can be distracting or even uncomfortable and threatening.

---

Bear in mind that the tone of voice, body language or facial expressions of a person with ASD may not match what they intend to communicate. Do not expect a person with ASD to read nonverbal communication. When necessary, be clear and direct.

---

# Disability Etiquette Guide Cont.



Make sure to allow for sufficient processing time when asking questions or engaging in a conversation.

---

People with ASD like routine and predictability. Let them know how long the current activity is expected to take and what will happen next.

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# Plain Language Guide



## People understand plain language

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Information in plain language is easier and cheaper to translate into alternate formats.

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Know your audience.

---

Use everyday language that readers are familiar with.

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Use short, clear sentences (15–20 words).

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One idea in a sentence is best.

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Keep paragraphs short with one subject in one paragraph.

---

Avoid using a multi-syllable word when a shorter one will do.

---

Avoid jargon, acronyms, technical words and details. If you must use an acronym, always provide a full version the first time you mention it.

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Use active rather than passive verbs, e.g. “All government agencies signed the Charter” rather than “the Charter was signed by all government agencies”.

---

Use “you” and “we”.

---

Give straightforward instructions, e.g. “please sign this Charter”.

---

Be helpful, human and polite.

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It’s okay to use bulleted lists.

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## Use clear print principles

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As a general rule, type sizing should be no smaller than 12pt (for print) or 16px (for screen). Some typefaces are more readable than others, consider this when you are designing for print or screen.

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Consider accessibility of the typefaces you select and how you use them. For example, sans-serif fonts can be easier to read, highly stylised or simulated handwriting can be challenging to read. Typefaces are available in different weights. Light options have less contrast between the paper and the text. Select typefaces with accessibility in mind and ensure you use your selected font in ways that support their legibility.

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# Plain Language Guide Cont.



Avoid italics, which can make text difficult to read for some people.

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Bold type can be used to emphasise text.

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Avoid using all capital letters in words. The human eye reads by recognising the shape of words and a word in all capitals interferes with this recognition.

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## Other design characteristics

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Be consistent with numbering, generally small numbers (1–10) should be written as words and larger numbers (over 10) should be written numerically.

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Use a typeface that makes numerals distinct.

---

Avoid underlining.

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Line length should be about 60 characters.

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Align text to the left-hand margin and avoid right-justified text.

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The space between lines should be 1.5 and twice the space between words.

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Words should be evenly spaced.

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Make sure there is a strong contrast between the text and the background.

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Use plenty of white space around text and images and separate the different elements of the page.

---



# Plain Language Guide Cont.



Avoid using text over images or patterned backgrounds.

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Avoid using colour shading and screens that reduce the contrast between text and background.

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To accentuate pieces of text, use white spaces or boxes.

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Leave a space between paragraphs for ease of reading.

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Avoid fitting text around images if this means lines of text start in different places and are difficult to find.

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Avoid using watermarks in the background of content, such as “draft” and “confidential”. Instead, signal these clearly on the front page and include them in the running header or footer.

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Allow extra space/widely spaced lines on forms for people to write on or for signatures.

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Consistency is important, for example make sure page numbers are in the same place on each page.

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## Paper

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Use matte or satin paper rather than glossy paper.

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Use paper of enough weight so the print does not show through on the other side.

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## Binding

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Printed documents should open flat. Ensure you budget for binding if printed documents are a critical part of your information dissemination plan.

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# Types of Impairments



An impairment can be intellectual, psychiatric, physical, neurological or sensory. It may be temporary, intermittent or ongoing. People may acquire an impairment through an accident or illness, and/or a person may be born with an impairment. Multiple impairments are common, especially with increasing age.

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## **Physically Disabled:**

Includes people who may or may not use a mobility aid like a wheelchair, crutches or prosthetic limbs, or those who are blind or who experience low vision.

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## **Neurodivergent people:**

Includes people who process information differently to what is expected or considered to be “typical”. Dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), dyspraxia, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) are all common neurodivergent conditions.

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## **People with an Intellectual / learning disability:**

Includes people who have a lifelong cognitive impairment that impacts on their ability to learn and process new information and learn new skills. This may require them to need support with daily living.

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## **Psychosocial disability and / or Mental distress:**

Includes people who experience ongoing impacts of a mental health condition and / or short term or episodic mental distress.

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## **People who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing (HoH) or who experience hearing loss:**

Includes people who identify as part of the Deaf Community, including its culture and language and those who experience functional hearing loss.

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## **People with Acquired or Traumatic Brain Injury:**

Includes people whose brain injury is due to either a medical condition or illness (acquired brain injury), or an accident or incident that has involved Chronic Illness, a long term health condition or other invisible impairment.

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# Contact

Feel free to reach out to the team behind the Inclusive Code  
[theinclusivecode@specialgroup.co.nz](mailto:theinclusivecode@specialgroup.co.nz)

