

The Scoop on Reporting about People with Disabilities

This was prepared for students in journalism to encourage the appropriate AP style and language in reporting on people with disabilities.

The DVD is available free from the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities

Notes:

- The viewing time for this audio described, open captioned video is approximately 30 minutes.
- The estimated time for the interactive exercises is 10 minutes.
- The **essential skills** addressed by this training include clarity, engaging language, investigative research, use of direct and indirect quotes, function of headlines, use of illustrations and photographs, and design of advertisements.

About the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities

The Governor's Committee mission furthers opportunities for persons with disabilities to enjoy full and equal access to lives of independence, productivity and self-determination.

Committee work includes:

- making recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on disability policies;
- promoting compliance with state and Federal disability laws;
- supporting local committees that do similar work; and
- recognizing employers and media professionals for contributions to Texans with disabilities.

Twelve volunteer Committee members are appointed by the Governor, seven of whom must have a disability.

Visit: <http://gov.texas.gov/disabilities/>

About the Barbara Jordan Media Awards

In 1982, the Committee began recognizing communicators for accurately and progressively portraying people with disabilities. At the suggestion of many in the media, the awards were named for the late Barbara Jordan, one of Texas' most distinguished citizens and foremost spokespersons for the rights of all people. The beautiful, three inch bronze medallion was designed by David Deming, an internationally prominent sculptor.

Each year the Committee honors a select group of communicators in the fields of print, radio, photojournalism, television, advertising, and other areas. There is a specific student category, but students may also enter in other categories.

For an entry form or more information, visit the website:

http://gov.texas.gov/disabilities/awards/barbara_jordan_media_awards/

Or contact:

Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities

PO Box 12428

Austin, Texas 78711

512-463-5739

512-463-5745 (FAX)

GCPD@gov.texas.gov

***The Scoop* on Reporting about People with Disabilities**

Words Matter

Who are some people with disabilities?

**Students - Neighbors - Friends - Family - Co-workers - Athletes - Actors -
Doctors - Veterans - Politicians - Writers - Artists - Engineers - Scientists -
Musicians - Lawyers - CEOs - Teachers**

Randy, Judy, Shane, Nancy, Kym, Pat, Cindy, and **Doug**

When you met Doug in the video were you surprised to find out that he is a Structural Engineer?

What words DO NOT emphasize value?

Those people
The Disabled - The Handicapped
Disabled - Handicapped
Crippled - Victim - Sufferer
Afflicted - Stricken
Deaf - Dumb - Mute
Retarded
Crazy - Insane
Bound - Confined

What words DO emphasize value?

Person with a disability - Athlete who uses a wheelchair - Artist with a visual impairment -
Child with learning disabilities - Student with hearing loss - Dancer with ADHD - My friend
who uses sign language - Or, how about just saying... my neighbor, my cousin, etc?

Or simply use the person's name: Randy, Judy, Shane, Nancy, Pat, Cindy and Doug

Headlines Matter

See examples below. The first headline in each issue area uses appropriate language; the second, with an underlined word or phrase, needs to be edited to reflect more respectful language.

Accessibility:

1. Access for fans with disabilities goes above and beyond at Dallas arena
2. Handicap access pier dedicated

Communication:

1. Assisting people with disabilities in a disaster
2. Device lets the disabled cast votes in private

Education:

1. Seven in ten teachers have students with disabilities
2. Overcoming ADHD

Emergency Preparedness:

1. Evacuation procedures for residents with mobility impairment
2. Firefighters' plans for crippled patients

Health:

1. Study of veterans with head injuries linked to later depression
2. Anorexic sues to live on Campus

Housing:

1. New book describes designers with disabilities
2. Wheelchair-bound woman will be 1st to get house with added features

Recreation:

1. Children with disabilities play ball
2. Ponies help the retarded heal

Transportation:

1. Stop: This space is reserved for a person with a disability
2. Handicap parking patrol assists police department

Veterans:

1. Exhibit shows works of veterans with disabilities
2. **Amputees** run in Sunday's race

Workforce:

1. Youth with disabilities celebrate mentoring day
2. **Saved** from Silence

Question: What do these phrases from the headlines communicate?

fans with disabilities - people with disabilities - students with disabilities - veterans with head injuries - designers with disabilities - person with a disability - children with disabilities - youth with disabilities?

Answer: Energy, Independence, Dignity, Respect, and "People First"

Now look at second headline in each subject area. Negative words are **bolded and underlined**.

Question: What do these words communicate?

Answer: Helplessness, Dependence, Pity, Illness, or "Disability First"

Discuss these headline rewrites:

Access: Pier offers access to people with disabilities

Communication: Device provides privacy for voters with disabilities

Education: New techniques assist people with ADHD

Emergency Preparedness: Firefighters' plans for hospital evacuation

Health: Person with anorexia sues to live on campus

Housing: Woman first to receive accessible home features

Recreation: Ponies used as a therapeutic tool for children with disabilities

Transportation: Citizen Patrol assists police in enforcing accessible parking

Veterans: Sunday's race includes veterans with disabilities

The Scoop on Reporting about People with Disabilities

Interviewing Tips

- Do focus on the story.
- Do prepare for the interview.
- Do locate an accessible interview place.
- Do promote dignity, respect and understanding.
- Do ask questions; don't assume.
- Do respect privacy and individual preferences.

Do include interviews with people with disabilities.

Do not avoid people with disabilities.

Do treat adults as adults.

Do not patronize.

Do remember that people with disabilities are ordinary people.

Do not portray people with disabilities as extraordinary.

Do offer assistance.

Do not provide assistance unless your offer is accepted.

Do use actors and actresses with disabilities.

Do not use people without disabilities to represent a person with a disability.

Do ask the person to repeat information that you do not understand.

Do not pretend to understand.

Do place yourself at eye level if interviewing a person using a wheelchair.

Do not lean on the individual's wheelchair.

Do let people with visual disabilities know where the camera is.

Do not begin an interview without identifying the camera's location.

Do interact with individuals using service animals.

Do not pet or interact with the working service animal.

Do speak directly to the person who has a disability.

Do not shout and do not speak through the interpreter or attendant.