

Disability related things you may see and want to talk about...

Service Animals



Simple: That is a service (or working) dog. It has a job to help the owner. Even though you like dogs (for example) we can't pet it, talk to it or stare at it so it can do its job.

Detailed: Do not interact with the service dog in any way. It is working and any distraction can put the handler in danger. It's not ok to ask what the service dog is for, unless the handler offers this information.

<https://www.abilities.com/community/assistance-dog.html>

Parking Spots



Simple: These are accessible parking spots. They make it easier for people who need to be closer to their destination.

Detailed: People with disabilities use them because they are close to where they need to go. People with any kind of disability can use these spots. Often accessible spots are next to curb cuts and have diagonal access lines to allow for a lift or wheelchair ramp. Sometimes they have extra room for exiting the vehicle. Accessible parking spots and curb cuts were very rare before 1990. Once the ADA was passed curb cuts and accessible spaces were mandated, however there are still issues in finding these access points and spots due to a variety of issues.

Curb Cuts



Simple: Curb cuts are little hills. People on any kind of wheels (wheelchair, stroller, bike, etc.) can use them with ease.

Detailed: Curb cuts literally cut a curb into a slope. This slope is great for anyone using wheels, but especially wheelchair users. They often have raised bumps, those bumps indicate to blind or low vision folks that the street is just ahead.

Audible Traffic Signals



Simple: It makes noise so someone who can't see well knows when the light is green or red.

Detailed: This audible traffic signal is helpful for both people who are blind and not blind. People who are on their phones or maybe not paying attention will hear the signal. Blind people/people with low vision use the auditory signal so they can be safe crossing the street.

Bumps on sidewalks - Tactile paving



Simple: The bumps on the sidewalk help people who can't see know where the sidewalk ends and the street begins.

Detailed: Tactile paving is a system of specific textures used on footpaths, stairs and train station platforms to assist pedestrians who are blind or low-vision.

Their surface pattern is detectable by long canes that are used by people who are blind or low-vision or under their feet to know where a street is approaching, a dangerous surface is ahead, or the ground is slanting at a different angle.

Push Button Operated Doors



Simple: A button that opens the door.

Detailed: A button at wheelchair level for wheelchair users to use to open doors. These can be beneficial for both non-disabled and wheelchair users because they are hands free. You can use anything (elbow, head etc.) to press them.

Breathing (Oxygen, Bi-pap and Trach-vent)



Simple: It helps them breathe.



Detailed: Some people's lungs/muscles don't work as well as they should and need help to breathe. Some people need this only at night, while others need it during the day as well. Using this allows them to have a better quality of life.

Cochlear Implant



Simple: A cochlear implant helps someone who is deaf or hard-of-hearing to hear some sounds.

Detailed: An implant doesn't restore normal hearing, but can give a deaf person some representation of sounds in their environment and help them understand speech. It does not make the person no longer deaf and it's a piece of equipment, so it can be taken off, and also can break. Not all Deaf people are candidates for an implant and for some people they don't work, but also many Deaf people do not want one as they see Deafness as culture and not as something that needs fixing.

Hearing Aid



Simple: A hearing aid is something worn over the ear that makes sounds louder.

Detailed: A hearing aid is a small electronic device. It doesn't require surgery and may help someone who has hearing loss and having a hard time hearing all the time or in certain situations.

Communication Boards



Simple: A communication board helps someone who can't speak be able to communicate.

Detailed: A communication board helps a person who some, or all of the time, cannot rely on their speech. They may have some speech and use it to communicate more clearly, or they may not speak much, clearly, or at all. A communication board may be electronic and have speech output, or may be used by pointing to the letters, words or images and having them read by an assistant or the person whom the device user is communicating with.

Closed and Open Captions



Simple: They are the words being said on screen. People who are deaf or hard-of hearing use them to know what is being said.

Detailed: Closed captioning is when the words can be turned off and on. Open captions are where the captions are present on screen and cannot be turned off. Captions also help people learn to read, those who are learning a second language, watch videos in noisy or public locations, and help some people keep focused and better understand what is being said.

Accessible Icons



Simple: This is a symbol that lets people know that wheelchairs can get in and move in the space easily. This means the space is wheelchair accessible.

Detailed: This is an updated symbol from the old static version into one that is dynamic, independent, and focuses on the person. "Accessible Icon Project provides supplies and services to transform the old International Symbol of Access into an active, engaged image. We think visual representation matters. People with disabilities have a long history of being spoken for, of being rendered passive in decisions about their lives. The old icon, while a milestone in ADA history, displays that passivity: its arms and legs are drawn like mechanical parts, its posture is unnaturally erect, and its entire look is one that makes the chair, not the person, important and visible. As people with disabilities of all kinds—not just chair users—create greater rights and opportunities for social, political, and cultural participation, we think cities should evolve their images of accessibility too."



Feeding Tubes, Etc.



Simple: It helps them eat.

Detailed: Some people are not able to eat well through their mouth / esophagus. A feeding tube can help a person get food into their bellies. Some go down the nose (NG tube), but most are one's you can't see because they attach directly to a button on someone's belly (G tube). A feeding tube improves quality of life for the person using it.

Restroom Signage:



May include Braille and/or international symbol of accessibility:

Simple: It lets people know that people with disabilities can use this restroom. People who don't see can read that it's a restroom by feeling the little bumps with their fingers.

Detailed: The wheelchair icon on this sign means the restroom is accessible. It lets people know that wheelchairs can get in the restroom and that a person can wheel under a sink. People with any kind of disability can use these restrooms. The sign is also written in Braille, so people who don't see can read it by feeling the little raised bumps with their fingers. Accessible restrooms were very rare before 1990. Once the ADA was passed accessible restrooms were mandated, however there are still issues in finding them due to a variety of issues.

Street signs calling attention to "Deaf Child" or "Blind Child at Play"



Simple: Lets cars know that there is a Deaf / Blind child who lives here so the drivers can be extra careful.

Detailed: Lets drivers know that there is a Deaf / Blind child who lives here. Since the child may not be able to hear / see the cars well, the sign lets the drivers know to drive carefully.

(There have been complaints from the disability community against the yellow signs. Research shows that they do not slow traffic and go virtually unnoticed by drivers. There is also concern that they put children at risk for predators, give parents and children a false sense of security, waste of taxpayer funds and invade a child's privacy.)