



Guide for Journalists

How to talk to
a person with
an intellectual disability

Intro

The media is a vehicle for transmitting ideas, reflections and major changes in our society. For this reason, we need to carefully consider the word choice and angles of our coverage.

The following tool is meant to give you more appropriate language for speaking about people with intellectual disabilities in our society.

In this guide, you'll find a lexicon of words you can use (plus words to please ban from your vocabulary), as well as tips on how to approach people with intellectual disabilities during an interview.

But first and foremost, it's important to remember that a disability does not define a person.

Happy reporting!



A Better Understanding of Intellectual Disability

An intellectual disability is a condition and not an illness.

People therefore do not "suffer from" and are not "afflicted with" an intellectual disability.

They live with this condition.

Favour these
expressions
in your
vocabulary



A person with an
intellectual disability

A person **who has**
an intellectual disability

A person living with
an intellectual disability

Eliminate these expressions from your vocabulary



A person who is **afflicted** with
an intellectual disability

A person **suffering from** a handicap or an
intellectual disability

Intellectually impaired

Intellectually/mentally handicapped

Mentally retarded

A deficient/disabled

A persone who functions at the mental
capacity of an X-year-old.



Interview process

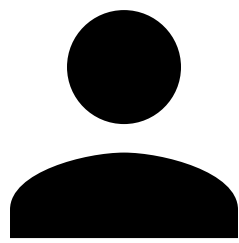
Interviewing a person with an intellectual disability is no different from any other interview.

NO STRESS!



Approach 1
Focus group

Approach 2
Individual
interview



Approach 3
With facilitator



The journalistic approach to the interview

FOCUS GROUP

Studies show that the individual interview can be stressful for some people. The focus group method is less intrusive and lets people express themselves more easily.

It is always a good idea to plan for a pre-interview meeting. Here you will establish your first contact and instill trust. When choosing a location for the interview, it is also recommended to choose a place the person is familiar with.

SOLO

FACILITATOR

To assist with interpretation, it can sometimes be useful to call upon the interviewee's network and enlist a facilitator who knows the person well.

What about during the interview?

Make sure your questions are clear, simple and well understood.

Use images like pictograms and photographs when possible.

Take the time to reformulate the question if you sense any uncertainty.

Listening

When it comes to people with intellectual disabilities, an essential point that arises time and again is the importance of listening.



It's rare that we give people with intellectual disabilities the chance to express themselves. So, when a journalist hands them the mic, it's important to take the time to listen.

“I like it when people listen to me, without cutting off what I’m saying,” explains Lucie, the host of the podcast, *Apprendre à se connaître - Getting to know one another* “The journalist needs to listen to the person they’re asking questions to. Otherwise, it’s no use.”

Consent

It takes some extra rigor to get consent from a person with an intellectual disability.

To ensure you obtain free and clear consent, you need to take the time to thoroughly explain the goal and structure of the interview.

Signature

The interviewee must have a clear understanding of the project, as well as the journalist's production and publication goals.



Capacities

Just like anyone else, people with intellectual disabilities have a variety of interests, hobbies, concerns, friendships and romantic relationships. One way to avoid journalism that reduces a person to their disability lies in creating a more complete portrait of your subject.

Be careful!

Avoid pity and charity.

It's very important to stay away from paternalistic and infantilizing attitudes

Learn more...

What are the causes of intellectual disabilities?

Is intellectual disability a mental health issue?



Do many people live with an intellectual disability?

For the answers to these questions: [click here](#)

Visit



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