

## Lesson 1 for Grades K–2

# Getting to Know People with Physical Disabilities

## Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to begin to familiarize students with the term disability, and to raise awareness about the experiences of people with physical disabilities. Through children’s literature and personal connections with people who have a physical disability, students come to understand the capacity of people with disabilities to engage in activities that all people enjoy. Students will also come to know and recognize the International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities.

**[NOTE:** In advance of teaching this lesson, consider whether you have any students in your class who have a disability, whether it is a visible physical disability or a learning disability which is often invisible. Sometimes students feel relieved to discuss a topic so relevant to their lives while others might feel awkward or embarrassed. This does not mean you should not discuss the topic; however, be careful not to highlight their situations, put them on the spot or use them as an example of a person with a disability. Be aware that strong feelings could arise and plan in advance for how to handle it. Also, consider talking with the students or their parents in advance. In order to appropriately define language and guide student discussion on disability issues, it is recommended that teachers carefully read ADL’s resource sheets on disability prior to facilitating lesson with students.]

See the following resources for further reference:

- [Evaluating Children’s Books that Address Disability](#)
- [Disability Glossary](#)
- [Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability](#)
- [Suggested Language for People with Disabilities](#)

## Objectives

- Students will learn the terms disability and physical disability.
- Students will understand and recognize the International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities.
- Students will discover the various abilities of people who use wheelchairs.
- Students will meet a person with a physical disability to learn more about the daily experiences of people living with a disability.
- Students will develop a class book depicting what they learned about people with disabilities.

## Key Words

Ability  
Difference  
Disability  
Sign  
Symbol  
Wheelchair

## Time

20 minutes for Part I, and 1 hour for Part II

## Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities](#) (one for teacher use)
- [Arnie and the New Kid](#) by Nancy Carlson (one for teacher use)

Other Material:

- basic art supplies, construction paper crayons, markers

## Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.

## Techniques and Skills

analyzing main ideas from a storybook, communicating ideas in words and drawings, developing a class book, examining and recognizing symbols, formulating questions, large group discussion

## Procedures

### Part I

1. Hold up the [International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities](#) for all students to see. Ask students:
  - Have you seen this sign before? Where have you seen this sign?
  - What does this symbol look like to you? (Explain that this symbol is a picture of a person who uses a wheelchair, and is for people who are disabled. This sign can be found in parking spaces close to the entrance of a store, or a park, or a school so that people who use wheelchairs or who have trouble walking do not have to travel far to get inside. Sometimes it can be found on seats in buses or trains, and means that those seats are reserved for people with disabilities.)
  - What is a disability? (Explain that a disability is a condition that limits a person in being able to see, hear, walk or speak. Some people with disabilities may be blind, or deaf, or may use a wheelchair if they are unable to walk.)
  - Have you ever met a person with a disability?

2. Explain that the class is going to read a book about a student who has a physical disability and uses a wheelchair. Invite students to join you in reading the book [Arnie and the New Kid](#) by Gina and Mercer Mayer.

**Book summary:** In *Arnie and the New Kid*, Phillip uses a wheelchair and has the challenge of being new to town. Arnie targets Phillip with acts of bullying and name-calling until Arnie falls, breaks his leg and finds himself temporarily disabled. As Arnie begins to understand and experience a physical disability, the two become friends.

3. Ask some or all of the following discussion questions as you read the story aloud to students:
  - In what way is Phillip different from most of the other kids at his school?
  - Why didn't he have many friends?
  - Was there anything that Phillip could do using his wheelchair that surprised you?
  - How do you think Phillip felt when Arnie teased him because he uses a wheelchair?
  - How did Phillip help Arnie when he fell?
  - What did Arnie discover after he got injured?
  - Do you think Arnie and Phillip enjoyed playing with each other after school? How do you know?
  - How did Arnie feel when he got his caste off?
  - What do you think Arnie learned from Phillip?
  - Were you surprised that the two of them became friends?

### Part II

1. Invite a local community member who uses a wheelchair or who wears a prosthetic device to visit the class (or take the class to visit them) so that students have a chance to meet a person with a physical disability. Make sure this is someone who has experience talking with young children about her/his disability. In preparation of the visit, develop a list of questions that the students would like to ask about what it is like to live with a physical disability.

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**NOTE:** If this is not possible, gather books about people with disabilities so that students can learn more about what it means to have a physical disability and use a wheelchair (see suggested titles listed below). Refer to the ADL resource [Evaluating Children's Books That Address Disability](#) for guidelines on choosing children's literature on disability.

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Suggested books (see also, ADL's [bibliography on Disabilities](#) for other books):

- [Let's Talk about Being in a Wheelchair](#) by Melanie Ann Apel
- [Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair](#) by Jamee Riggio Heelan

- [\*Featherless/Desplumado\*](#) by Juan Felipe Herrera
  - [\*King for a Day\*](#) by Rukhsana Khan
4. At the conclusion of the visit (or after reading one of the books), invite students to draw pictures and/or write about what they learned about people with physical disabilities. Once the students have completed their pictures and writing, assemble into a class book, and review with students.

### Extension Activities

- As an extension to the class book activity above invite family members and/or schoolmates to a reading of the class book so that students can share what they have learned about people with disabilities. Assist students in answering any questions that guests may have about people with disabilities.
- Organize a field trip to visit a local school or community center that hosts athletic programs for people with physical disabilities. Have students talk to some of the sports players about their disability and how they became involved in the sports program. Visit the [International Paralympics Committee](#) website to find local athletic programs for people with physical disabilities.

# International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities

