



Factsheet 9: News

The information and news we consume everyday can affect our perceptions of people and athletes. We know from research that psychological barriers and negative news stories significantly prevent disabled people from taking part in sport or activities. This makes it particularly important that organisations write positive news stories about disabled people being active.

Planning: Create an inclusive communications policy

The best way to embed inclusive communications across your organisation is to develop an inclusive communications policy that clearly sets out your commitment to inclusion. Your policy can include a style guide that covers writing about disabled people in sport or activities.

Tailoring content to sport

Promoting your sport or activity via the media is a great way to reach disabled people. At a regional or local level in particular, using high-resolution images will mean they are more likely to be included in a media article and increase wider interest. Our research found this was important because at a local level:

- Photos are less likely to be taken of disabled people taking part in sport
- When they are used, they tend to be of a lower quality
- Action shots of the sport increases recognition of athletes competing, and provide a better understanding for those new to the sport
- If there is no image, or a low-resolution/poor quality image, readership of the article is likely to be lower, with journalists less interested in covering the story



Types of story

- Feature articles that are particularly positive and are seen to provide a good ‘hook’ will attract readers to the sport. It is seen as the responsibility of the writer to deliver accurate and relevant information when explaining a sport
- When writing stories profiling individual athletes, focus on their sporting achievements, and so on, rather than their impairment or how their condition can affect their lives
- There is an opportunity here to include details about: their personal life, training regime, diet, and wider team - including their physio, family and coaching team
- While a mixture of inspirational and ‘superhuman’ articles are seen as useful in increasing interest in disabled athletes and the sports they take part in, writing needs to avoid coming across as patronising
- There is also public appetite for more articles about the rules and regulations of sports and activities for disabled people. This is particularly in relation to the classification system or sports where there is no equivalent for non-disabled people such as goalball

It should be noted:

- Not all sporting opportunities involve classification systems. At a grassroots level, disabled people do not need a classification to take part or enjoy recreational activities
- Not every impairment or health condition is included in each classification system
- As well as the Paralympics, there are other international events such as the Deaflympics, Special Olympics World Games, World Dwarf Games and INAS Global Games



Style and language

- Headlines are key to attracting readers to articles. They need to be clear, concise, appropriate and tailored to the content of the article. Avoid acronyms. Not everybody is familiar with disability or sports language. For example, 'IPC' (International Paralympic Committee) might be clear to those in the sports sector, but beyond it there can be low awareness
- Keep it concise. Readers choose which articles to read in a short space of time. Examples such as team announcements, or citing the competition and the sport, are often popular among readers
- When you are interviewing or profiling a disabled athlete, the individual should be consulted on how they want their impairment or condition to be referenced. Writers need to be careful to avoid using language that may be inadvertently patronising or negative
- Accurate use of language is important when writing about disabled people in sport. Principally, this is to ensure that different disability sport classifications are explained accurately, but also to shape wider public perceptions of disabled people. Consistency in language used is essential, particularly when referencing the sport's conditions or technical classifications

Ambassadors

- Athletes and celebrities from various backgrounds can play an important role in promoting sport and physical activity for disabled people. Consider using stories about your organisation's ambassadors in your marketing
- It is important to show the reasoning for selecting an ambassador and the role they have supporting your organisation and the wider sport. This gives credibility and validity to their position and responsibilities





Key points

- Clearly explain how the sport or activity works
- Ensure there is a 'hook' to the story and it is sufficient to interest your readers
- Focus on achievement, rather than impairment
- Use appropriate language that is easy to understand and backed by an equally appropriate headline
- Understand how the disabled participant would like their impairment to be described. Take care to avoid patronising language

Resources and further information

Our **Media Guide: Reporting on disabled people in sport** can provide you with further advice on how to write positive news stories about disabled people in sport. Available on our website.



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This document is available in Word format. Please contact us if you need support. Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport. Registered Charity no. 1075180

