

Speech Coach Guide

Best Buddies Ambassadors



Thank you for volunteering your time to be a speech coach for our Best Buddies Ambassadors Training! You are helping to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to advocate for themselves and others while becoming leaders in the community! We hope this will be an equally rewarding experience for you and want to provide you with some helpful information to ensure that your experience and the training will be a success.

What is a Best Buddies Ambassador?

- An ambassador is an individual with or without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who acts as a representative of Best Buddies, speaking on behalf of the organization at events in the community.
- Each ambassador will work to raise awareness about inclusion and spread the word about Best Buddies.

What is a Speech Coach?

- As a speech coach, you have the important task of supporting an ambassador on their individual journey of discovery and self-advocacy. Typically, you will be matched one to one with an ambassador and provide individualized support and feedback throughout the training.
- The speech coach acts as a sounding board and you are encouraged to brainstorm with your ambassador to discover stories and ideas that will make for an impactful speech. In your role you can offer support in a variety of ways, including editing the ambassador's speech, providing presentation tips to create a high-quality speech, and practice public speaking skills and tips.

What to Expect at an Ambassadors Training

- Trainings are facilitated by Best Buddies staff and/or volunteers with support from community and corporate partners.
- The goal of the training is for each ambassador to create a short (2-3 minute) speech that shares their personal perspective and experience, and a topic of their choice with a call to action for their audience.
- The training will focus on three main areas: overview of Best Buddies, instruction for speech writing and presentation, and discussion around the specific theme of the training. Each training will also include breakout sessions in which speech coaches will be paired with ambassadors to provide individualized support.
- As a speech coach, you will be working one-to-one (or in a small group) with an ambassador as they craft a speech. The training facilitator will periodically check in with each group to offer support and feedback and provide prompts to assist in the construction of the speech and guide the conversation.
- Ambassadors are encouraged to incorporate information about the Best Buddies mission as they will use this speech to represent the organization upon completion of the training.
- At the conclusion of the speech writing process, ambassadors will have the opportunity to present their speech to the training attendees. There will be time following the speech delivery time for you and your ambassador to connect and review feedback on the presentation.
- Typically, an in-person training will often take three to five hours to complete and include a break for breakfast or lunch depending on the timing. These trainings can also be adapted to fit a virtual format and condensed to a shorter time frame. In this case, a separate time is typically scheduled for speech presentations.
- Your comfort is of the utmost importance to us. Please do not hesitate to notify the Best Buddies staff member if you have any questions, issues, or concerns throughout the course of the training.
- You are welcome, but not obligated, to exchange contact information with the ambassador you have partnered with if you would like to stay in contact and provide additional support and friendship. If you do exchange contact information, we recommend establishing clear boundaries regarding your role as a volunteer and availability.

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Speech Coach Tips

1. Remember, this is your ambassador's speech first and foremost. You are encouraged to help when needed, but make sure the voice of the ambassador is coming through in the speech.
2. Be patient. At times, there may be long periods of silence. The ambassador you are working with may be thinking or pondering what to say next. Allow time to think and respond before pushing forward.
3. Make sure your ambassador can read and understand their speech. Practice reading aloud and suggest alternatives to words that do not sound natural to the speaker.
4. Help keep ambassadors on track. Everyone is excited to be at the training and meet new friends but keep the focus of your time together on speech writing and self-advocacy.
5. Everyone will work at their own pace, and this is encouraged; however, work with your ambassador to meet the timeframe of the class. If your ambassador needs more time, focus on having content to work with first; you can always go back and edit later when time allows.
6. We all learn and grasp things differently; if you feel the ambassador you are working with does not understand a concept, review the instructions again.
7. The agenda is designed to start with a variety of brainstorming activities that may be helpful during the writing process. As the ambassador share their story, write down notes and compelling quotes that may contribute to a great speech.
8. It is okay and encouraged to provide constructive feedback. All professional speakers have editors. Ambassadors have the final say in how their speeches will sound but speak up if you feel there is a way to help the speech become better. Ambassadors are learning from you as much as the facilitator.
9. Be respectful. This may be the first-time ambassadors are sharing their stories and they may have personal anecdotes. All ideas are worthy of consideration and all ambassadors have potential.
10. Encourage your ambassador to add humor to their speech (if appropriate). Although this training does require work it should be fun and enjoyable to all that are involved.
11. If you have any questions, the training facilitator is always available to help and provide support!

Communication & Language Resources

Best Buddies promotes social inclusion and respect for all people. The easiest way to show respect is in how we speak about people. There are two main types of disability language: person-first language and identity or identity-first language. Person-first language emphasizes the person, not the disability. Identity language emphasizes the person's disabilities, and that the disability plays a role in who the person is and reinforces disability as a positive cultural identifier. It is important to note that whether a person with a disability prefers people-first or identity-first language is not universal.

Using appropriate language of respect allows us to acknowledge and understand that flexibility for both people-first and identify-first is appropriate when speaking and having conversations. By adopting respect for the person as your guiding principle, you can have an open conversation or discussion that acknowledges both the disability and unique identify and shared humanity of all.

People First Language

People First Language is an approach that many organizations, including Best Buddies, and people in the disability rights movement use when speaking about our peers with disabilities. People first language recognizes that individuals with disabilities are—first and foremost—people. It emphasizes each person's value, individuality, dignity, and capabilities.

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When choosing words to use about people with disabilities, this approach recommends referring to the person first, not the disability. As such, a person with an intellectual or developmental disability should not be described as a “disabled person.” Best Buddies and its members use “a person with an intellectual or developmental disability” instead. By doing this, we place the emphasis on the person, not the disability.

By using people first language, we are helping to eliminate the negative stereotypes and limitations that others often ascribe to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The following examples, as referenced in the [How to Write About People with Disabilities](#) guidelines, provide information on what terms to use and which ones to avoid when talking or writing about people with disabilities.

Say this

People with disabilities
Uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user
Accessible parking or restroom
Intellectual disability
Autistic, on the autism spectrum
Person with a brain injury
Person with a learning disability
Nondisabled, person without a disability
How should I describe you or your disability?

Instead of this

Intellectually disabled people, handicapped
Confined to a wheelchair
Handicapped parking, disabled stall
Mentally retarded, retardation
Abnormal
Brain damaged
Slow learner, disabled
Normal, able bodied, healthy
What are you? What happened to you?

Reminder: while People First Language is a widely accepted approach, every individual may have different preferences for how they would like to be addressed. When in doubt, ask!