



ParalympicsGB



Guide to reporting on Paralympic sport



The British Paralympic Association (BPA) has produced this reference guide to assist the media reporting on Paralympic sport and athletes.

While the profile of Paralympic sport has grown considerably in recent years, inaccuracies still exist. This guide is designed to encourage and support accurate and appropriate reporting and to help ensure that the correct terminology and language is used.

The Paralympic Games are the world's second largest sporting event by athlete number, featuring elite performers who train as hard and as often as their Olympic counterparts.

We believe it is crucial that Paralympic athletes are portrayed or referred to as elite athletes first and foremost, rather than seen primarily as people who have overcome great adversity.

While that may be part of the story, Paralympic athletes do not want their impairment to define them or their achievements.

Performance, sporting ambition, training, competition and the emotions associated with winning and losing are all relevant subjects that our athletes and sports would expect to focus on. Anything specifically relating to, or focussing on, an elite athlete's impairment is generally considered unnecessary, and certainly secondary, and should really only be considered within a sporting context.

We hope this guide will provide you with the information you need to report on Paralympic sport and Paralympians, both accurately and appropriately.

The correct language can help shift perceptions of disabled people. With your help and support in raising the profile of British Paralympic athletes and their phenomenal sporting achievements, the BPA can achieve its vision of positively influencing the way that British society thinks, feels and behaves towards disabled people in general.

Thank you for supporting us by using the right language in your articles and output.

LANGUAGE

Describing athletes

Description	Term	Incorrect
An athlete who has competed at a Paralympic Games	Paralympian	Para-Olympian, Para athlete, Olympian
A disabled athlete who is likely to be selected for a Paralympic Games	Paralympic hopeful	Paralympian
A disabled athlete	Disabled athlete, or just athlete	Paralympian, Paralympic hopeful – these terms don't describe disabled people that compete in sport at any other level
A Paralympian who has retired	Retired Paralympian	Former Paralympian, ex-Paralympian.

In rare cases (for example, Italy's Assunta Legnante), athletes have competed in both the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Assunta is both an Olympian and Paralympian.

The title Paralympian is a specific one and like other important titles such as Lord, Professor, Doctor or Baroness, should be used in its appropriate context. Paralympians are athletes who have competed at a Paralympic Games. Paralympian is a title for life; it is not removed after retirement.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games

Both the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games are large international multi-sport events, held in the same city, often in the same venues, just a few weeks apart.

However there are a number of differences – both Games have separate histories, identities and global governing bodies. The International Paralympic Committee governs the Paralympic Games.

DESCRIPTION	CORRECT	INCORRECT	WHY?
The name for the Paralympic team of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	ParalympicsGB	Team GB	Team GB refers solely to the Olympic team
The organisation responsible for the Paralympic movement in the UK	British Paralympic Association (BPA)	BOA	The British Olympic Association and British Paralympic Association are separate organisations, although often collaborate
The Paralympic Games	The Paralympic Games	Para-Olympics, Special Olympics, Olympic Games	The term 'Paralympics' derives from 'Parallel Games'

The British Paralympic Association is the National Paralympic Committee for the UK. National Governing Bodies (NGBs) look after specific sports.

Describing Medical Conditions

Paralympic athletes want to be referred to as elite athletes first and foremost and as disabled people secondarily - if at all. Where you feel you need to refer to an athlete's impairment, a passing reference is preferable to going into detail.

Preferred Terms

Description	Correct	Incorrect	Why not?
A person who has an impairment	Disabled person	Person with a disability	This is in line with the Equality Act 2010
To describe a person who is not disabled	Non-disabled person	Able-bodied, normal	"Non-disabled" gives a clearer distinction as to what you are describing than "able bodied"

A phrase to describe an impairment	A person/athlete who has a spinal cord injury, a person/athlete with paraplegia	A spinal injury athlete, a paraplegic	Avoid describing a person as an impairment
A phrase to describe someone who uses a wheelchair, either occasionally for additional mobility or independence, or for everyday living needs or independence.	Wheelchair user or a person who uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair	Terms like 'bound' or 'confined' should be avoided as they infer entrapment. Instead a wheelchair is an aid or tool, which a person uses.

Being with and around disabled people

Offer assistance but remember it will not always be accepted; your help may not be required. If your assistance is declined, do not be offended or put off asking in the future.

Speak directly with the person rather than their companion, assistant or interpreter. Use your usual manner and speak in your normal tone – a physically disabled person does not necessarily have a hearing impairment or learning disability.

If you are talking to someone with a **learning disability**, always use simple, plain language and give them time to answer your questions.

Wheelchair users: Be aware that a wheelchair is part of a person's personal space so do not lean on it or hold on to it unless offered permission to do so.

Behave naturally: For example, shake hands with a disabled person as you would any other person, even if they are wearing a prosthesis or have limited movement of their hand or arm.

Everyday phrases: Don't feel self-conscious about using everyday phrases - many are perfectly acceptable. Some people who use wheelchairs use phrases such as 'I'm going for a run'. It is also perfectly acceptable to say to a visually impaired person 'I will see you later'.

If you are unsure of what to do in a particular situation, please ask.

Being with and around disabled athletes

There is no need to treat Paralympic athletes differently from how you would treat any other elite athlete. For example, remain mindful of their training commitments, the fact that they need to stay rested, hydrated and get enough food and recovery in order to train.

Some medical conditions mean that athletes tire more quickly than non-disabled athletes. This means that sometimes interview times are limited. We ask for your understanding in these circumstances.

Avoid some specific words and phrases – for example ‘suffers from’, ‘sufferer’, ‘victim of’ and ‘normal’/ ‘abnormal’ should not be used.

As well as success on the field of play, ParalympicsGB’s vision is to inspire a better world for disabled people. We appreciate the reporting you do can help change perceptions of disability sport.