



Canadian  
Down Syndrome  
Society

Société  
canadienne de la  
trisomie 21



# About Down Syndrome

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Elementary Presentation

# What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is not a disease or illness, you can't catch it like a cold or a flu.

When babies are born with Down syndrome, they have it for the rest of their lives.

Down syndrome is not caused by something the parents did.



Anyone can be born  
with Down syndrome



It doesn't matter...

...if you are a boy or girl.

...what your nationality is.

...where you were born.

...if you are rich or poor.

...who your parents are.

Down syndrome just  
happens, like winning the  
lottery or flipping a coin.



People with Down syndrome are just like everyone else...



Some people with Down syndrome will have similar features to others with Down syndrome like being shorter or have similar eye shapes...

But most of all, they will look like their brothers or sisters and their mom and dad.



Talking about Down  
syndrome

Use language that is respectful and  
appropriate and we can help people feel  
accepted, valued and treated with kindness.



Be accepting of each other and our differences.

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Remember that differences are what make the world great!



Do not use hurtful words

Acting mean, calling names, teasing and hurting someone is unacceptable and hurts their feelings.

# Use people first language

When someone has a disability and you are talking about them, always say WHO they are before anything else.

“This is my friend Ethan. He loves playing piano.”

“This is Susy and she is really good at soccer.”

“ My friend Maggie has three older brothers. She also has Down syndrome”

Describe who the person is first,  
not their disability.







## Avoid using stereotypes and generalizations when referring to people with Down syndrome

People with Down syndrome can experience lots of emotions; they can feel happy, angry, frustrated, excited, or sad.

Some like to sing and dance and others can be shy and quiet.

People with Down syndrome are different sizes and shapes; they can feel and do many of the same things as you!

People with Down syndrome can understand and do things just like you!

Some can have a hard time talking, writing, colouring or riding their bike.

Some can play instruments and play on your sports team.

They like to hang out with friends, go to birthday parties and be included in the classroom and in the community.

They grow up, may go to college, work and can live on their own, just like you might do!



People with Down syndrome may learn things slowly or in different ways.

Just like others, they might run slower or not be able to do the monkey bars.

They might write their letters differently or read slowly.

Sometimes they have to work extra hard to do the same things you are doing.





They might get confused about what to do,  
or they might have a hard time following directions,  
or they might have to leave the classroom with  
another teacher to help them practice some skills.

#### REMEMBER:

People with Down syndrome can do the same things  
as others,

but it might take a little more time and practice  
especially when they are learning something new.

# How you can help...

Set a good example.

Be patient.

Offer a little help and encouragement,  
fill their bucket!

But just like you, people with Down  
syndrome have different ways of learning  
and you'll see that they are more alike  
than different!





We all have different abilities, strengths and weaknesses.

It is not a bad thing to be disabled—but it is a bad thing to not see the ability of people with Down syndrome and what they can do!



People with Down syndrome are important to their families and communities and can do many great things!





# Frequently Asked Questions

**Can people with Down syndrome ride a bike?**

*With a bit of practice, yes they can ride a bike as well as play sports and many of the same things others can do.*

**What should I say to someone that has Down syndrome?**

*Ask someone who has Down syndrome anything. As long as you are using language that is respectful and kind.*

**Can a person with Down syndrome live on their own?**

*Yes they can, some live on their own or with a supportive roommate.*

**Sometimes kids in my classroom act differently. What should I do?**

*The best thing to do is show the person the best way to act by modelling acceptable behavior, they can learn from you.*



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Thank you to Hilary Gauld-Camelleri of *One For The Wall* for supplying most photos used in this presentation

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