

Style GUIDELINES

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BEST BUDDIES®



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BB Style Guidelines Recap



Introduction to Style Guidelines

The purpose of the style guide is to create consistent and accurate on-brand writing materials related to Best Buddies International. A strong sense of brand can differentiate Best Buddies and amplify every message we send and create.



Identity

What is **BESTBUDDIES®**

Best Buddies is the world's largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of the 200 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Our programs empower the special abilities of people with IDD by helping them form meaningful friendships with their peers, secure successful jobs, live independently, improve public speaking, self-advocacy and communication skills, and feel valued by society.

Our Purpose

Mission

Best Buddies International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development, and inclusive living for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

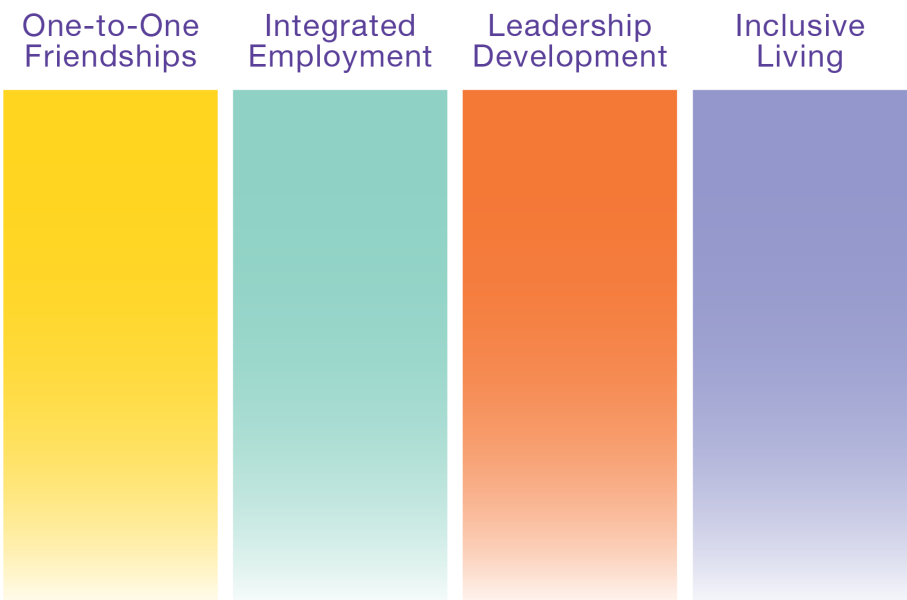
Vision

To put Best Buddies out of business. Best Buddies envisions a world where people with IDD are so successfully integrated into schools, workplaces and communities that its current efforts and services will be unnecessary. Until that vision becomes a reality, the organization will continue to educate middle school, high school and college students, community members, corporations and employers about the emotional, functional, and natural needs and abilities of people with IDD.

Who We Serve

The IDD community that Best Buddies serves includes, but is not limited to, people with Down syndrome, autism, Fragile X, Williams syndrome, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and other undiagnosed disabilities.

BESTBUDDIES® Four Mission Pillars:



Programs



One-to-One Friendships

Builds friendships between people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), offering social mentoring while improving the quality of life and level of inclusion for a population that is often isolated and excluded.

BESTBUDDIES® Middle Schools, High Schools, Colleges and Citizens

Creates an inclusive community for students and adults with IDD, helping them become socially integrated with their peers at every age.

e-BUDDIES®

Offers an e-mail program, in which a participant with IDD communicates online with a friend without IDD.



Integrated Employment

Builds friendships between people with and without IDD, offering social mentoring while improving the quality of life and level of inclusion for a population that is often isolated and excluded.

BESTBUDDIES® Jobs

A supported employment program that secures competitive paying jobs for people with IDD, therefore enabling them to work as respected individuals. The program develops partnerships with employers, assists with the hiring process, and provides ongoing support to the employee and employer.

An estimated 81% of adults (18+) with developmental disabilities do not have a paid job in the community. The Best Buddies Jobs program has participants employed full time who each have the potential to earn a total income upwards of \$1mm over 30 years and contribute \$250k in taxes back into the economy.

Programs



Leadership Development

Educates and empowers people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to become leaders, public speakers and advocates. Program participants can lead the effort to build a more inclusive world for people with IDD within their community.

BESTBUDDIES® Ambassadors

Educates and empowers people with IDD through group trainings and workshops to be leaders and public speakers in their schools, communities, and work places. Best Buddies Ambassadors is the next step for the disability rights movement — teaching people with IDD the skills they need to successfully self-advocate.

BESTBUDDIES® Promoters

Empowers youth to become advocates for people with IDD by organizing and attending inclusive special events that promote advocacy and bring awareness to the disability rights movement.

In elementary schools, Best Buddies is designed to offer students with and without disabilities a fun and engaging opportunity to participate in inclusive activities that promote friendship, acceptance, and interaction.



Inclusive Living

The Best Buddies Living program encourages people with and without IDD to live together in a vibrant community that is focused on supporting all residents in accomplishing their life goals and dreams.

BESTBUDDIES® Living

Provides individuals with and without IDD the opportunity to live together in a vibrant community that supports all residents in advancing their employment, financial literacy, continued education and life skills as they work to achieve their personal goals.

Best Buddies Living fosters an opportunity for residents to experience living with friends and colleagues and provides a supportive environment. Programs include weekly shared meals, fitness classes, cultural events, holiday parties, social activities, and sports.



Voice

Brand Tone

The Best Buddies voice is welcoming, friendly and fun. Our content is written by people, for people and our writing tone reflects that. Our communications is mission-driven. We use people-first language and ethical storytelling to empower our audiences to engage not only with our content, but also with our mission.

We write to connect with our participants, our mission and our supporters. The Best Buddies tone is optimistic, forward-thinking and professional. We base our writing on knowledge and experiences, embodying our mission of inclusion for all.

Style Rules

A few key elements of writing Best Buddies' voice:

1. **Person-centered**

Create content that tells stories about real people, our participants and gives people autonomy. Our audience will feel more connected to the organization, even if they're not directly involved. Refer to people as "who" not "that."

2. **Friendly and welcoming**

Create communication that feels real and personal, without eliciting pity. We want to make our audience feel happy and hopeful about the work we do.

3. **Clear and understandable**

Short sentences are easier to scan and read. Transparency is integral to Best Buddies. Always make your language simple and easy to understand. Avoid jargon.

4. **Accurate**

As an international organization advocating for inclusion, fact-checking is critical. Maintain consistency when reporting statistics about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), our programs or finances/donations.

5. **Promotes development and forward-thinking**

Incorporate initiatives and feedback to your communication. Show the ways that we are open to improve. Build content that promotes organizational development and holds yourself accountable.

6. **Empowers**

Be transparent about the barriers people with IDD face, while also talking about what we can do to be agents of change. Empower your audiences to join our efforts to break down these barriers and advocate for inclusion.

7. **Brevity**

Only say what you need to say. Start with the key messaging. Be mindful of your platform and the respective ideal content length.

8. **Fun!**

Create lively and interactive messaging that engages your audience. Celebrate and have fun - that's what friends are for!



Content Planning

Elements of Content Creation

Content creation is at the epicentre of organizational growth. Great content starts with a plan.

Audience

Define who your audience is. Who is your content for? This will help you refine your plan and achieve maximum engagement. This applies to every platform of communication you are using: social media, press releases, media pitches, grants, presentations, etc.

Goal

What do you want to accomplish? What does your audience need to understand? Why do you need to create communications materials for your audience?

Content Calendar

Create and adhere to a schedule for all required content, especially when multiple platforms are being used. Please note that all press releases must be reviewed by the Communications Department and allow 2-3 business days for review, when creating a calendar for your content creation.

Type

What *kind* of content best suits the audience? Video and infographics may help explain difficult concepts. Vary your written content with graphics and high-quality, mission-based images.

Promotion and Distribution

How will the audience find the content? Always link Best Buddies main and state sites to content. Use all necessary channels, if appropriate, to maximize content reach. An important part of understanding your audience is determining where they search for content/ information. Always plan for an optimized experience across all potential devices i.e laptops, tablets, phones, and other devices.

Measurement and Optimization

Create accessible metrics to track your progress. Plan for specific objectives that you want your content to achieve (mentions, clicks, fundraising goal, etc.)



Language and Copy

BESTBUDDIES[®]

as ONE

All Best Buddies International must use logo lock-ups and event names including state names, and written references to any office, as word statements. Be sure to use “Best Buddies in State,” “The State office of Best Buddies has...” or “Best Buddies programs across State serve ...” We are one organization and as such, all communications materials must reflect that.

Best Buddies Terminology

IDD: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. An individual is considered to have **intellectual disabilities** based on an intellectual functioning level (IQ) below 70-75; significant limitations in two or more adaptive skills areas, and the condition is present from childhood. **Developmental disabilities** are severe disabilities attributable to cognitive and/or physical impairments which appear before the age of 22 and are likely to be lifelong.

Best Buddies Global Ambassador: A Best Buddies Ambassador that represents Best Buddies on a global scale. To become a Global Ambassador, individuals have to go through a rigorous Ambassador Training.

Best Buddies Celebrity Ambassador: A celebrity that supports the mission of Best Buddies. These individuals work to spread the message of Best Buddies and support the organization during events, fundraisers and other special occasions.

Best Buddies Ambassador: A participant with or without IDD, youth or adult, who has completed official Best Buddies Ambassadors trainings and is committed to promoting and educating audiences about the mission, philosophy and benefits of Best Buddies through public speaking.

Best Buddies Citizens Participant: A Best Buddies participant that is involved in the Citizens program. Best Buddies Citizens pairs are adults in the corporate and civic communities over the age of 18 with and without IDD in one-to-one friendships.

Integrated Employment: Refers to jobs held by people with disabilities in workplace settings where the majority of persons employed are not persons with disabilities, where they earn at least minimum wage, and are paid directly by the employer.

Best Buddies Jobs Participant: A participant that is employed through the Best Buddies Jobs program. This program creates employment opportunities for people with IDD, allowing them to earn an income, pay taxes, and continuously and independently support themselves.

Best Buddies Promoter: Promoters seeks to spread the mission of inclusion to all grade levels. Promoters empowers youth to become advocates for people with IDD and open new Best Buddies chapters and programs by organizing special events that promote advocacy and bring awareness to the disability rights movement.

e-Buddies Participant: A Best Buddies participant that is involved in the e-Buddies program. e-Buddies is an e-mail pen pal program that provides safe opportunities for one-to-one e-mail friendships between people with and without IDD.

Buddies: “Buddy Pairs” consist of two people matched in a friendship - one with an IDD and one without. Buddies are involved

Copy Rules

Capitalization

All Best Buddies programs and events should be capitalized.

One-to-One Friendships:

- Best Buddies Middle Schools
- Best Buddies High Schools
- Best Buddies Colleges
- Best Buddies Citizens
- e-Buddies

Integrated Employment

- Best Buddies Jobs

Leadership Development

- Best Buddies Ambassadors
- Best Buddies Promoters

Inclusive Living

- Best Buddies Living

Capitalize “middle schools,” “high schools,” or “colleges” only if you are referring to the Best Buddies programs and if the words “Best Buddies” precede the program’s name(s).

Example: There are **middle schools** and **high schools** in Arizona that would like to have Best Buddies programs.

Example: **Best Buddies Colleges** is a very successful program in addition to **Best Buddies High Schools***.

Example: Lauren is involved in the **Best Buddies Middle Schools** program.

Additionally, only capitalize department/board/committee names if the full title is being used and if “Best Buddies” precedes the title:

Example: The Best Buddies International Finance Department is responsible for securing the organization’s 501(c)(3) annually.

Example: The finance department is managed by Jen Miller.

Example: The Best Buddies Connecticut Advisory Board secured \$15,000 in sponsorships.

Example: The fundraising committee consists of 15 members.

Additionally, only capitalize department/board/committee names if the full title is being used and if “Best Buddies” precedes the title:

Example: The Best Buddies International Finance Department is responsible for securing the organization’s 501(c)(3) annually.

Example: The finance department is managed by Jen Miller.

Example: The Best Buddies Connecticut Advisory Board secured \$15,000 in sponsorships.

Example: The fundraising committee consists of 15 members.

Copy Rules

Italics

Key words of events, projects, and slogans

When the formal name of an event is referenced, capitalize AND italicize it.

Example: The *Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle* or the *Best Buddies Friendship Walk* in Arizona was a huge success.

When using the formal name of an event, italicize it, e.g. *Best Buddies Leadership Conference*. When referencing the event throughout a document and without the words “Best Buddies” before the event name, capitalize and italicize.

Example: The *Best Buddies Friendship Walk* positively affects the lives of people with IDD.

Example: They are attending the *Friendship Walk*.

When select signature events are referenced in plural but not the specific one for the state or the formal event name, capitalize but do NOT italicize.

Example: Thousands participated in the **B**est **B**uddies **F**riendship **W**alks, and **B**est **B**uddies **C**hallenges etc.

For any use of an anniversary or date (e.g. 3rd annual or December 4th), make sure the ordinal indicator (e.g. “rd” or “th”) is in superscript.

Example: 27th Annual *Best Buddies Leadership Conference*

Example: *Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port*

* Note: All numerals 10 and under should be spelled out.

Any formal reference to a regional Best Buddies Friendship Walk should always appear in this order *Best Buddies Friendship Walk* in (State or Region).

Example: *Best Buddies Friendship Walk* in Arizona, NOT *Best Buddies Arizona Friendship Walk*.

Copy Rules

Acronyms

If you will be using a term frequently, you should use acronyms. If you only mention the term once, there is no need to use acronyms, since it might cause confusion. When using an acronym, first write out the entire phrase, and in subsequent uses the acronym, which should appear in parenthesis when first introduced. Then, use the acronym throughout the rest of the document.

Example: The Best Buddies **program manager (PM)** supports each chapter throughout the year by helping student leaders. The **PM** also trains and recruits chapter advisors.

Best Buddies Commonly Used Acronyms

Main Event Names:

Best Buddies Challenge (BBC), Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port (BBC: HP), Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle (BBC: HC), Best Buddies Challenge: Miami (BBC: MIA)
Best Buddies Staff Leadership Conference (SLC)
Best Buddies Leadership Conference (BBLC)
Best Buddies Friendship Walk (BBFW)
Champion of the Year (COY)
Best Buddies Month (BBM)
Best Buddies Prom (BBP)
Spread the Word (STW)
Back to Best Buddies (B2BB)

Other:

Best Buddies/Best Buddies International (BB/BBI)
Best Buddies Global Ambassadors (BBGA)
Best Buddies Ambassadors (BBA)
Best Buddies International Programs (BBIP)
Best Buddies Jobs (BBJ)
Best Buddies Shop (BB SHOP)

Titles (samples):

Vice President (VP)
Relationship Manager (RM)
Area Director (AD)
State Director (SD)
Employment Consultant (EC)
Program Supervisor (PS)
Program Manager (PM)

Departments (samples):

Global Mission, State
Development & Ops (SOPD)
Marketing & Strategic
Development (MSD)
International Programs (IP)
Government Relations (GR)
Human Resources (HR)



Accessible Communications

Best Practices

Users and audiences of all abilities will have a better experience with your communications if you consider accessibility concerns.

1. Important Questions

Does this language make sense to someone regardless of their level of involvement with Best Buddies?

Can this material be quickly scanned and understood?

If individuals can't see or hear the image, colors or video, is the message still clear?

Is the markup clean and structured?

Does this work well on mobile devices with accessibility features, core communication tools?

2. Brief and focused text

Include the most important content, first. Use short and simple sentence and paragraph structures. Spell out and/or avoid special characters. Be sure to visually distinguish link text.

3. Hierarchy in content structure

Emphasize important points. Start with an outline to help you create a hierarchy and utilize headings to structure your content.

4. Avoid directional language

If your content includes directional terminology, include additional text to provide context about the location. This is helpful when using screen reader tools and for potential layout changes.

5. Alt-text and closed captioning

Accurate closed captions or transcripts should be available for all videos, animations, memes and GIFs. Alt-text provides image, tables and chart descriptions.

6. Accessible graphics

Avoid hard-to-read color combinations on communications materials, emails, newsletters and graphics. High contrast may improve readability. Don't convey information with color alone.

People-First Language

People-first language always puts the person first.

A person with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) should never be described as a “disabled person,” rather “a person with an intellectual or developmental disability”. Emphasize the individual, not the disability to help eliminate the negative stereotypes and limitations that others often ascribe to individuals with IDD.

When you introduce the term intellectual and developmental disabilities, abbreviate using “IDD” and use the abbreviation throughout the rest of the document. Do not pluralize the abbreviation (i.e. “IDDs” is incorrect).

Examples of People First Language

Say this

- » People with disabilities
- » They have a disability
- » They have autism (or an autism diagnosis)
- » They have a diagnosis of Down syndrome
- » They have a learning disability (diagnosis)
- » They have a physical disability (diagnosis)
- » They are of short stature/a little person
- » They have a mental health diagnosis
- » They use a wheelchair/mobility chair
- » They receive special ed services
- » Communicate with their eyes/devices/etc
- » Congenital disability
- » Brain injury
- » Accessible parking, hotel room, etc...
- » They need__or they use__

Not this

- » The disabled
- » They are mentally retarded
- » They are autistic
- » They are Downs
- » They are learning disabled
- » They are quadriplegic/crippled
- » They are a dwarf/midget
- » They are emotionally disturbed/mentally ill
- » They are confined/wheelchair bound
- » They are special ed
- » Is non-verbal
- » Birth defect
- » Brain damaged
- » Handicapped parking, hotel room, etc...
- » They have problems/special needs



Bias-free
Communications

Inclusive Language

Best Buddies influences diverse populations internationally and all communications must be inclusive, diverse and sensitive to all differences. Bias-free language acknowledges diversity, promotes equal opportunities and respects all people.

Represent diverse perspectives

Be inclusive of gender identity, race, culture, ability, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, etc.,. Show different people in a wide variety of professions, educational settings, family settings and economic settings. Review all media and communications to provide accurate representation.

Avoid generalizations and stereotypes

Even 'positive' or 'neutral' stereotypes. Generalizations can oversimplify characteristics among those sharing the identity and overlook crucial differences and evoke or reinforce existing stereotypes. When you reference research studies, use actual findings rather than generics.

Be mindful of culturally sensitive terms

Be mindful of terms associated with military, political action or historic events that can spark offense, to some people. Although our tone is friendly, don't use slang, especially if it could be considered cultural appropriation. Be aware when you reference various parts of the world and research.

Use gender-neutral terms

Avoid using he, him, his, she, her, or hers in generic references and common terms. Rewrite to use the second person (you), a plural noun and pronoun, and/or a person's role. When referencing individuals whose gender is not known, specified, or is outside of traditional binaries, use appropriate alternative pronouns that presuppose a particular gender. You may use gendered pronouns if the people themselves use those pronouns.

Say this

- » chair, moderator
- » humanity, people
- » workforce, staff
- » operates
- » sales representative

Not this

- » chairman
- » mankind
- » manpower
- » mans
- » salesman



Imagery

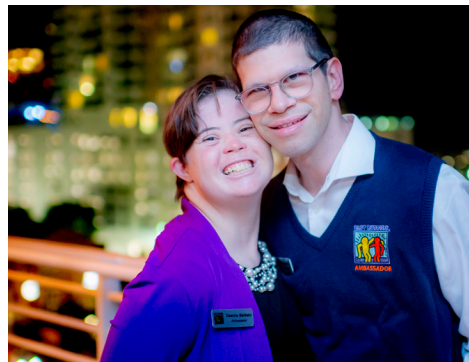
Our Photo Approach

Focus on hope, not despair.

Photography serves as a way to spread Best Buddies International's message of inclusion and a big part of what we do is captured through photos. When looking at Best Buddies photos, you will see that they portray our phenomenal participants with respect and kindness, always focusing on their abilities and going beyond their disabilities.

Our photographic style follows one common theme: inclusion.

With programs in every state in the United States and countries across six continents, our photos celebrate the diversity of our participants. The images that we use aim to inspire and motivate you to take action that will help us end the social, physical and economic isolation of the 200 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Best Buddies Style Guidelines

Recap

1. Identity

Best Buddies is a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendship, integrated employment leadership development, and inclusive living for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We strive for inclusion.

2. Voice

Use welcoming, friendly and inclusive language to connect with our participants and supporters. Develop mission-driven content that is forward-thinking and optimistic.

3. Content Planning

Use the active voice as often as possible. Active verbs bring lucidity to sentences; passive voice weakens the clarity of the sentence.

4. Language and Copy

Best Buddies' programs and events have specific styles and formatting that need to be adhered to in order to ensure all Best Buddies communication is uniform and consistent.

5. Accessible Communications

Always use people-first language, refer to the person first, not the disability. Make sure your content is accessible for all abilities to experience.

6. Bias-free Communications

Always create content that is inclusive and welcoming. Use gender-neutral alternatives and don't generalize. Be mindful of your audience and content subjects.

7. Photo Approach

Our imagery celebrates the diversity of our participants. Always capture the energy of our events and participants with respect and kindness.

Be sure to use these style guidelines and share with third parties or collaborating partners. We ask that these style guidelines are followed to maintain writing consistency across all mediums.



Questions?

The Best Buddies Communications Department is here to help.



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MAKE A FRIEND | DONATE | JOIN THE JOBS PROGRAM

BESTBUDDIES.ORG