



FACE EQUALITY
INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA STANDARD ON DISFIGUREMENT



@FaceEqualityInt
faceequalityinternational.org

**Creating a world where
everyone is treated fairly
whatever their face looks like**

The International Media Standard supports responsible media organisations and professionals to show respect and care for individuals who live with a facial difference or disfigurement.



The media should avoid words or descriptions which could further stigmatisation and stereotyping. It should always:



VOCABULARY

- Use sensitive, non-stigmatising vocabulary.
- Name the condition or injury that causes a facial difference, and give an objective explanation of it.
- If in doubt about a generic phrase, 'a person with a disfigurement' or 'facial difference' tend to be preferred.



SENSATIONALISM

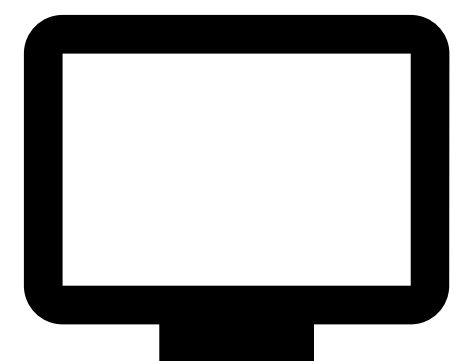
- Refrain from over-dramatising the condition or injury, and avoid parallels with non-human objects or characters from fiction or non-fiction who are defined adversely by their condition (ie: Joseph Merrick or Freddy Krueger).

PERSONALITY

- Avoid portraying the person as passive, helpless, a victim, to be pitied or inept.
- Avoid words or phrases that suggest the person's facial appearance indicates anything to do with their personality (eg: that they may be a villain).
- Avoid asking readers or viewers to express an opinion on someone's face or attribute qualities to a person based on their appearance.

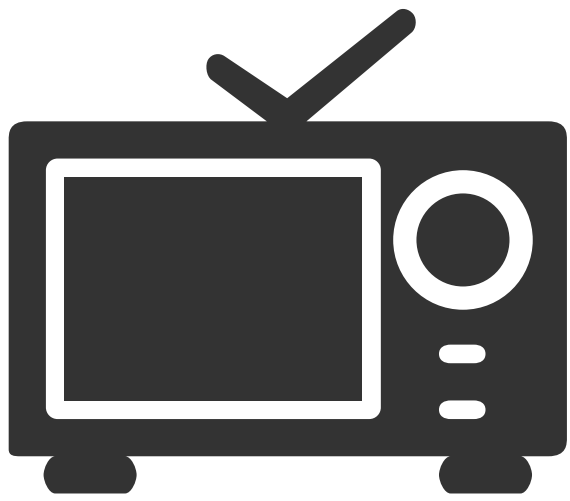
SYMPATHY

- Avoid evoking sympathy purely because someone has a facial difference or disfigurement; any sympathy should be warranted by the context — for example, if someone has been mistreated.



MORE ON LANGUAGE

- Face Equality International uses 'disfigurement' as a collective term for the visual effect that a congenital, skin or eye condition, a paralysis, a scar or the treatment of cancer or another condition can have on the appearance of a person's face, hands or body.
- The Alliance also respects the fact that some people dislike the term 'disfigurement' and so 'facial difference' may be more widely accepted. In some instances, 'visible difference' may be used when relating to a disfigurement that affects a person's face and body.



EDITING

- It is common to see editing that involves dramatic music, black and white or grey filters and other dramatic devices. Unless the subject matter justifies this, i.e hate crime or abuse, then the device creates sympathy without reason and further ostracises the person with a disfigurement. It's important to prioritise empathy over sympathy.

INTERVIEWING

- If conducting a live broadcast interview ask the individual to self-identify and provide you with their preferred term, i.e 'I have vitiligo and I prefer for it to be called a skin condition'.
- Speak to your interviewee first and have researchers/producers get to know them before the interview in order to figure out their preferred language, whilst ensuring everyone involved has read this Standard and understands the subject matter.
- Take the person's lead on how comfortable they are about their experience and how much they would like to share. If they would rather not share medical details or that of an accident or trauma, then try not to probe for details. Consider whether it's relevant to the feature to discuss anything that may create drama or sympathy without reason.



Face Equality International, an alliance of 30 NGOs/charities which work for people with facial differences, has produced this Standard to prevent poor media coverage given the success of standards from NGOs such as the Samaritans. Responsible media organisations should consult and accept the guidance of FEI's Member organisations in their country or region which will publish their own Media Guidelines, appropriate to their own culture(s), language(s) and subject area. Face Equality International will list these on its website