



Natural Resources Conservation Service – Caribbean Area

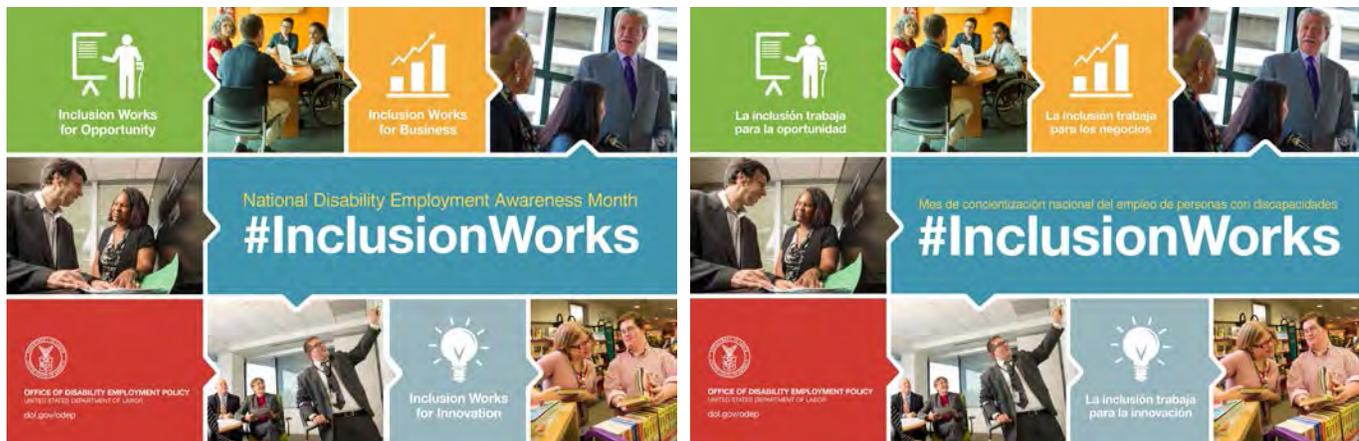
654 Plaza, Suite 604
654 Muñoz Rivera Ave.
Hato Rey, PR 00918-4123
Voice 787.766.5206
Web: <http://www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov>

Disability Special Emphasis Program

October: National Disability Employment Awareness Month

National Disability Employment Awareness Month celebrates the accomplishments of men and women with disabilities. The Office of Disability Employment Policy, reflecting on the important role disability plays in workforce diversity, designated this year’s theme as “#InclusionWorks.” Observed each October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities and educates the public about the value of a diverse workforce inclusive of their skills and talents.

The 2016 theme is “Inclusion Works”



[This year’s Presidential Proclamation](#) states:

Americans with disabilities are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as any other citizen -- including the right to dignity and respect in the workplace. Too often in our Nation’s history, individuals with disabilities have been eager to work but could not find a job, facing red tape, discrimination, or employers who assumed that disabled meant unable and refused to hire them. This month, we recognize the significant progress our country has made for those living with disabilities, and we honor the lasting contributions and diverse skills they bring to our workforce.

As a country, we must acknowledge that despite the great strides we have made in the 26 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act -- a groundbreaking civil rights law aimed at eliminating discrimination and assuring equality for people with disabilities -- we still have far to go to raise awareness of discriminatory obstacles that individuals with disabilities encounter in employment. Today, the labor force participation rate for Americans with disabilities is less than one-third the rate of those without a disability, and the unemployment rate is more than twice as high for individuals with disabilities. To break down more of these barriers, we must expand access to the resources and training necessary for Americans with disabilities to succeed in the workplace...

This year’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month theme focuses on the importance of inclusion, especially when it comes to business, opportunity, and innovation. When we diversify our workforce we create opportunities for growth and improvement -- not just for those with disabilities, but for everyone. This month, let us continue striving to forge a future where workplaces are more inclusive and where employees are more accepted for who they are. And because we know that our country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, let us keep working to ensure no one is left behind or unable to pursue their dreams because of a disability.

Please be aware of this special observance month and celebrate the hard work, commitment and accomplishments of all people with disabilities.



Strategies for Working with People who have Disabilities

from <http://www.washington.edu/doit/strategies-working-people-who-have-disabilities>

There are many ways that disabilities can affect the ability to perform effectively on the job. Levels of disability and ability are unique to an individual. Most accommodations are simple, creative alternatives for traditional ways of doing things. These examples will help to have a more inclusive workplace and will help people with disabilities to fully participate in work-based learning experiences. They are by no means comprehensive. You and the person with a disability with whom you work will have opportunities to generate uniquely effective ideas.

Low Vision: By “low vision” we are referring to people who have a visual impairment but have some usable sight. This includes some people who are “legally” blind. For people who have low vision, standard written materials may be too small to read and objects may appear blurry. Others may only see objects within a specific field of vision. Still others see images with sections missing or blacked out. Learning through a visual medium may take longer and may be more mentally fatiguing for people who have low vision than for people who do not.

Examples of accommodations for people with low vision include large print text, handouts, signs, and equipment labels. Many photocopy machines can enlarge text. Some people with low vision may also benefit from having career development publications, job instructions, or other printed materials recorded on audiotape. It may take weeks or months to procure materials in audiotape format. Consequently, it is essential that career counselors and employers select and prepare their materials well before they are needed.

Other examples of accommodations for people with low vision include providing seating where the lighting best meets their individual needs; making brochures, job announcements, and other information available in electronic format; and equipping computers with large monitors and screen enlargement software.

Blindness: People who have not had vision since birth may have difficulty understanding verbal descriptions of visual materials and abstract concepts. Consider the example, "This organizational chart looks like an upside down tree." If one has never seen a tree, it may not be readily apparent that the structure of note has several lines which can be traced up to one central point. However, a person who lost her vision later in life may find this verbal description easy to understand. Additionally, demonstrations based on color differences may be more difficult for people with blindness to understand than demonstrations which emphasize changes in shape, temperature, or texture. During presentations, meetings, and job-site demonstrations, a clear, concise narration of the basic points being represented in visual aids is helpful.



People who have no sight cannot read written materials in standard formats. Ready access to printed materials on computer disks or via the Internet allow blind workers, who have the appropriate technology, to use computers to read text aloud and/or produce Braille. Some materials may need to be transferred to audiotape. Since it may take weeks or even months to procure specific materials in Braille or on audiotape, it is essential that career counselors and employers select and prepare materials that are needed by a worker who is blind well before the materials are going to be used.

Other examples of accommodations for people who are blind include the provision of tactile models and raised-line drawings of graphic materials; adaptive equipment, such as talking calculators and tactile timers; and computers with optical character readers, voice output, Braille screen displays, and Braille printers.

In communicating with a worker who is blind, it is important to remember that the visual impairment does not affect his ability to think or to hear. Speak in a normal tone. In addition, consider the following suggestions.

- To start a conversation, touch the person lightly on the arm or address him by name to gain his attention.
- Ask the person if he would like you to orient him to a room and any obstacles you may perceive that it contains.
- Use descriptive words such as, “in front of you at eleven o'clock,” instead of vague language such as “over there.” Keep in mind that a person who is blind cannot relate to hand or facial gestures.
- Feel free to use visual words such as “look” and “see.” Expressions such as these are commonly used by people who cannot see.
- Always ask permission before interacting with a person’s guide dog.

Hearing Impairments: Some people who have hearing impairments may hear at a functional level with the assistance of amplification devices such as hearing aids. Others hear only specific frequencies, sounds within a certain volume range, or nothing at all.

Individuals with hearing impairments often use some combination of lip-reading, sign language, and amplification to understand spoken information. People who are deaf from birth generally have more difficulty speaking and understanding the structure of language than those who lost their hearing later in life. In a job setting, everyday noises -- fans and lights -- that are not a bother to hearing people may have a profound effect on the ability of people with hearing impairments to hear. Career development providers and employers should make worksite adjustments to allow interns or employees to maximize their learning potential and success.



Individuals with hearing impairments may have difficulty following instructions when delivered in large and open settings, particularly if the acoustics cause echoes or if the speaker talks quietly, rapidly or unclearly. They may find it difficult to simultaneously watch demonstrations and follow verbal descriptions if they are watching a sign language interpreter, a “real-time” captioning screen, or a speaker’s lips. It may also be difficult for them to follow or participate in group discussions, particularly when they are fast-paced and unmodulated, since there is often lag time between a speaker’s comments and their interpretation for people with hearing impairments.

Examples of accommodations for people who have hearing impairments include the provision of interpreters, sound amplification systems, note takers, visual aids and electronic mail for meetings and office discussions. Visual warning systems for emergencies may also need to be installed.

The following suggestions can be employed when employers and career counselors communicate with a worker who has a hearing impairment.

- Face the person with a hearing impairment and speak directly and normally to him or her.
- If a person who is deaf is using an interpreter, talk directly to that person, not to the interpreter. The interpreter should be treated as an inanimate object. Focus on the relationship with the deaf person.
- Use drawings, writing and gestures to assist you in communicating.
- Make sure lighting levels are adequate.
- Be aware of jargon used on the job and avoid it whenever possible. For example, ADA could mean Americans with Disabilities Act, the American Dental Association, or average daily attendance. Additionally, ASAP (as soon as possible), and BCOB (by the close of business) could be confusing.
- A person with a hearing impairment may wish to use a closed FM amplification system or sign language interpreter when participating in group activities. Upon request, these services should be made available by the career services staff or the employer, depending on who is hosting the activity.
- Find ways to fully include the person with a hearing impairment in group conversations. For example, repeat discussion questions and statements made by other participants in a meeting or presentation.

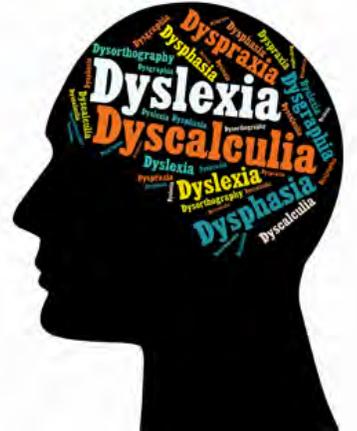
Speech Impairments: Some disabilities affect the ability to speak. Computer-based speech output systems provide an alternative voice for some people who cannot speak. Since electronic mail does not require the ability to speak, it provides an efficient medium for communication. The following suggestions will assist employers and career counselors in working with people who have a speech impairment.

- Concentrate on what the person is saying.
- If you do not understand something, ask the person to repeat what they said and then repeat it back.
- Be patient; take as much time as necessary to communicate effectively.
- When appropriate, ask questions which only require short answers or a nod of the head.
- Avoid communication in noisy, public places. Talk in a private, quiet area when possible, particularly when discussing things that apply only to that person.
- Do not speak for the person or attempt to finish his or her sentences.
- If you are having difficulty understanding what a person is saying, consider writing or electronic mail as an alternative means of communicating.
- Encourage the worker with a speech impairment to participate in discussions.



Specific Learning Disabilities: Because a person does not use a wheelchair, have hearing aids, or use a cane does not mean that he or she does not have a disability. Some disabilities are invisible. These include specific learning disabilities. Individuals with specific learning disabilities generally have average to above average intelligence, but may have difficulties demonstrating knowledge or understanding abstract concepts. Auditory, visual or tactile information can become jumbled at any point when it is transmitted, received, processed and re-transmitted. It may take longer for some people who have learning disabilities to process written information. Lengthy reading or writing assignments or tasks may be difficult to complete in a standard amount of time. Some people may be able to organize and communicate their thoughts in one-to-one conversations, but find it difficult to articulate those same ideas at a noisy worksite.

Examples of accommodations for people who have learning disabilities include audiotaped instructions; a quiet workstation location; visual, aural and tactile demonstrations incorporated into directions; and computers with voice output and spelling and grammar checkers. Also be aware of environmental factors that tend to distract people. Avoid placing people who are easily distracted near high traffic areas and consider seat, window and door placement in relation to them. Provide a quiet place for them to work.



The following suggestions will assist career services staff and employers in working with individuals with a learning disability.

- Discuss the best ways to communicate instructions with the person, confidentially. These may include written, verbal or visual strategies, or a combination of several modes of communication. A tape recorder or electronic mail may be useful for relaying instructions in some instances. The person may have developed methods for compensating for the limitations caused by their disability. Discuss options with them.
- Once instructions are given, get feedback from the person to determine if they were understood completely.
- Be patient when the person begins a new job. Decrease their stress level by assigning tasks that they can accomplish and build on their strengths.
- Avoid spontaneous changes in the work schedule and environment. A consistent routine is best.
- Reduce time pressures if possible.
- Give assignments early and let the person pace themselves.

Mobility Impairments: Mobility impairments range from lower body impairments, which may require use of canes, walkers or wheelchairs, to upper body impairments, which may result in limited or no use of the hands. It may take longer for individuals with mobility impairments to get from one worksite to another. It may require special accommodations for them to get to field worksites or off-site meetings. Some people with mobility impairments find it difficult or impossible to manipulate objects, turn pages, write with a pen or pencil, type at a keyboard, or retrieve work-related documents without accommodations.

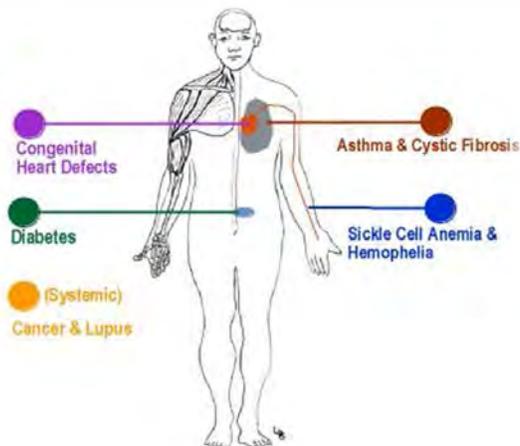
Examples of accommodations for interns and employees with mobility impairments include the provision of office assistants for specific tasks, accessible office locations, adjustable tables, equipment located within reach, work-related materials available in electronic format, and access to job-related resources on the internet. Computers can be equipped with special devices such as voice input, Morse code input and alternative keyboards. Job-related items need to be able to be reached and accessed, and wheelchairs and walkers need space. Avoid clutter and maintain a well-organized worksite.

The following suggestions will assist career services staff and employers in working with a person who has a mobility impairment.



- Offer to help (opening a door, carrying packages) if it makes sense. Ask yourself, "Would I want help in a similar situation?"
- Consider a person's wheelchair or walker as an extension of their body. Therefore, leaning on the wheelchair or walker, or placing your foot on a wheel, is not okay.
- Speak to a person who uses a wheelchair, walker, cane or crutches in a normal voice strength and tone.
- Talk to a person who uses a wheelchair at eye-level whenever possible. Perhaps you can sit rather than stand.
- Feel free to use phrases such as "walk this way" with a person who cannot walk. Expressions such as this are commonly used by wheelchair users.

Health Impairments: Some health conditions and medications affect memory and/or energy levels. Additionally, some people who have health impairments may not be able to work full-time or on a daily basis. Part-time employment will be an important option for some people with health impairments. Be flexible and work to establish a reasonable schedule with workers who have health impairments.



Be aware that some health impairments are chronic and stable while others are sporadic (e.g., severe allergies) and require flexible and variable accommodations. Modify your placements, assignments, and/or methods to accommodate sporadic attendance. Additionally, allow for people with health impairments to take time off during the work day to take medication, have a snack (e.g., for a person who is diabetic), rest or meet with professionals. They may also need access to a refrigerator to store food, supplements or medication.

Be aware of medications that people may be taking and their potential physical, emotional and cognitive effects. This is particularly important for people taking medications for conditions such as seizure disorders and diabetes.

Observe employees or interns with health impairments to determine if there are times during the day when they are more productive. Observe changes in moods, attitudes, quality of work or general health. Report concerns to appropriate supervisory personnel.

Examples of accommodations for individuals who have health impairments include the provision of note takers and/or taped instruction; flexible attendance requirements; assignments available in electronic format; and electronic mail for staff meetings, office discussions and distribution of jobsite materials and notes. Telecommuting is sometimes a reasonable option for people with health impairments.

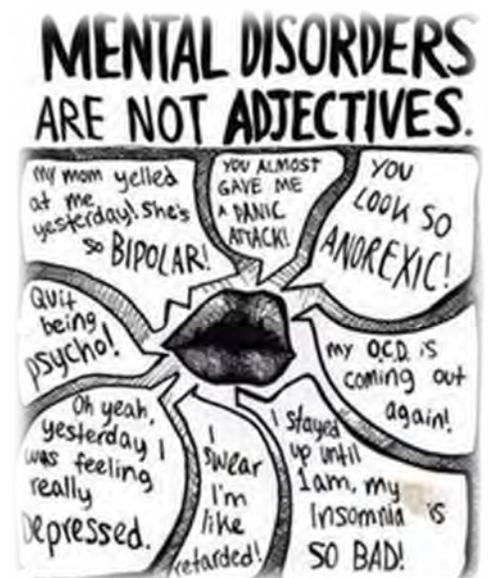
Psychiatric Disabilities: People who have psychiatric disabilities are not always considered mentally ill. A person with a psychiatric disability may need to be provided with unique on-the-job accommodations to prevent exacerbating behaviors that are not appropriate in the work environment. Applying the following suggestions will assist career services staff and employers in working with an intern or employee with a psychiatric disability.

- Be positive and expect the person to do well. Friendliness is always the correct road to take.
- Be consistent. The person should know what to expect. Carry through with expected actions.
- Make instructions clear. You may want to write instructions down and explain them verbally.
- Reward and compliment good performance on the job. Criticism should be done privately. Provide positive suggestions for improving performance.
- Meet with the person privately on a regular basis to determine if there are problems that can be “headed off” before they get out of hand. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

When working with a person who has a disability, keep in mind that we are all more alike than different. Each person comes to a new job with unique skills and abilities. Internships allow all students to build on current competencies while gaining new skills that relate to their academic and career goals. Employers who interact with people who have disabilities have a great impact on their on-the-job success. Many employers use team work environments to maximize the potentials of their employees; this structure allows employees to work together to maximize individual strengths while compensating for weaknesses.

Expect that people with disabilities participating in a work-based learning experience are there to succeed. Keep your expectations high. Be positive and proactive in helping them achieve success. Career counselors and employers who follow the following suggestions can help students with disabilities accomplish just that.

- Do not exhibit the dramatic, “Oh my _____, if I was _____ I wouldn't be able to _____” syndrome! Most likely the participant with a disability has a full life and has learned to positively meet the challenges posed by the disability.
- Avoid labels for groups of people with disabilities such as “the blind” or “the deaf.” Instead, say “people who are blind” or “people who are deaf.” Never use the term “deaf and dumb.”

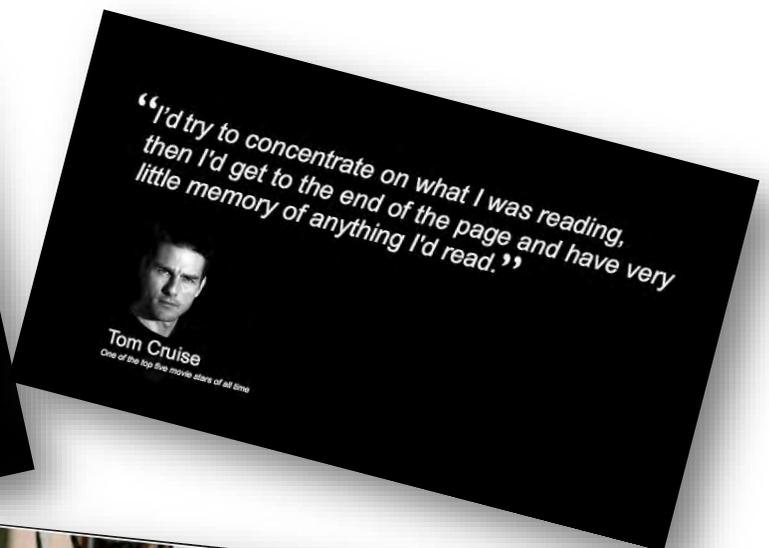
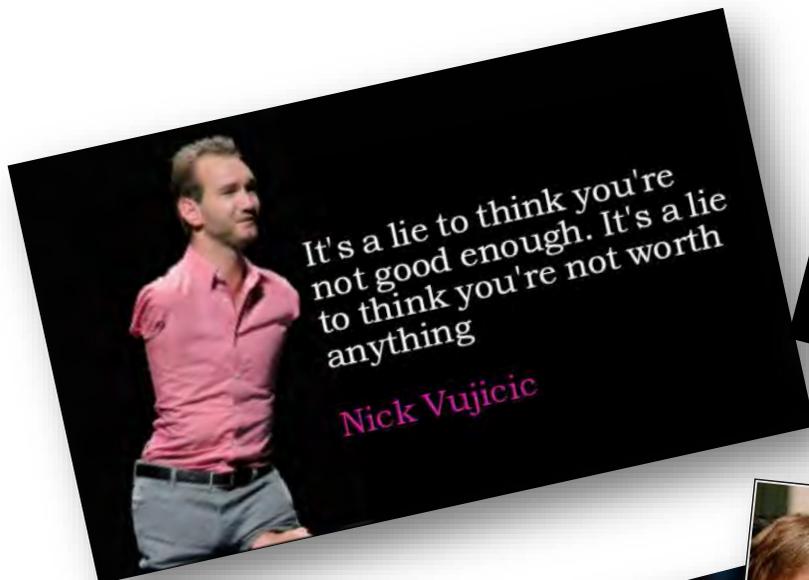


- Avoid emotionally-charged descriptors such as “bedridden,” “homebound,” “crippled,” “unfortunate,” “pitiful,” “stricken with,” “wheelchair-bound,” or “confined to a wheelchair.” Instead, simply be descriptive such as “he uses a wheelchair.”
- Avoid euphemisms to describe disabilities. Terms such as “handicapable,” “differently-abled,” “physically challenged,” and “physically inconvenienced” are considered by many to be condescending. They reinforce the idea that disabilities cannot be dealt with in a straight-forward manner.
- Speak directly to a person and focus on their abilities rather than their disability.
- People who have disabilities have the same range of likes and dislikes as those who do not. Not all blind people are musical; not all people who use wheelchairs play wheelchair basketball; and not all deaf people read lips. Talk about things you talk about with other employees – weather, sports, what you did today, etc.
- If you are feeling uncomfortable about a situation, let the person who has a disability know.
- Be sure expectations such as job performance, behavior and dress are clearly defined, and that they are met.
- Provide specific feedback on job performance. If you have concerns about performance, mention it. The person may not know they are doing something incorrectly.
- If a person appears to be having difficulty at a task, they probably are. Ask if, and how, you may help.

TED Talk: Disability

People talk about disability! Visit this link to access videos about disability:

<http://www.ted.com/talks?sort=newest&topics%5B%5D=disability>



Let's Play.... SUDOKU!!!

From: <http://independentmama.empowernetwork.com/blog/benefits-of-playing-Sudoku>

Don't for a minute think that Sudoku is a waste of your valuable time. There are many benefits of playing Sudoku, but one of the biggest and most important ones is that Sudoku keeps your brain active and encourages better brain function.

We all place so much emphasis on doing physical exercise to keep our body healthy but most of us give little thought to exercising our brains. If you analyzed the benefits of playing Sudoku, you would most certainly turn your attention to playing it at least once a day.

Researchers rank solving Sudoku puzzles daily among the top ten non-traditional and alternative ways to boost brain power. Researchers have discovered that just as physical exercise keeps muscle loss at bay, *Sudoku exercise keeps brain cells from dying and also encourages better brain function*. Keeping this in mind, it would seem that the benefits of playing Sudoku are of particular importance to the elderly as it would suggest that Sudoku helps keep dementia at arm's length and even slows it down for those already afflicted.

Other experts agree with these findings, saying that solving challenging mind games like Sudoku puzzles inhibit or prevent the development of Alzheimer's disease and memory loss.

Sudoku is not a math game. It's a comprehension game and will improve your ability to comprehend complex ideas. While studying certainly stimulates the brain, research has shown that there are many benefits of playing Sudoku for students, and that when they do mental workouts like Sudoku they have improved comprehension and even higher IQs. This in turn helps them in their studies.

It can be likened to adults who are in jobs which are intellectually challenging. These adults have better mental function when they age.

Benefits of playing Sudoku:

1. Reduces the chances of developing Dementia or Alzheimers.
2. Improves your memory.
3. Teaches you how to think quickly and efficiently.
4. Increases your concentration
5. Stimulates your mind.

So do your brain a favor and start playing Sudoku. The benefits of playing Sudoku are numerous so incorporate it into your daily exercise plan.

How to Play SUDOKU: A Sudoku puzzle is a grid of nine by nine squares or cells that has been subdivided into nine sub grids or "regions" of three by three cells. The objective of Sudoku is to enter a digit from 1 through 9 in each cell, in such a way that:

- Each horizontal **row** (shown in pink) contains each digit exactly **once**
- Each vertical **column** (shown in yellow) contains each digit exactly **once**
- Each sub grid or **region** (shown in green) contains each digit exactly **once**

This explains the name of the game; in Japanese, *Sudoku* means something like "numbers singly."

Solving a Sudoku puzzle does **not** require knowledge of mathematics; simple logic suffices. (Instead of digits, other symbols can be used, e.g. letters, as long as there are nine **different** symbols.)

In each Sudoku puzzle, several digits have already been entered (the "givens"); these may **not** be changed.

The puzzler's job is to fill the remainder of the grid with digits –respecting, of course, the three constraints mentioned earlier. A "good" Sudoku puzzle has only **one** solution. While the first Sudoku puzzle was published as early as 1979 (back then, it was called "Number Place"), the game's popularity really took off in 2005; it can now be found in many newspapers and magazines around the world. <https://www.Sudoku.ws/rules.htm>.

Let's Play...

	2			9	3		1	8
	1			7		6		
7	4				6			2
								7
8		2			1	5	4	9
4		3	5	8				
6			9				2	
						8		
	3	7		2	8			5

5				8	6			1
		2	7		1	6		
	7	1				2	5	
9	1			2			7	
3			1	4	5			6
	6			9			2	4
	5	3				4	6	
		8	9		3	5		
2			5	1				7

For questions or concerns about the DSEP, please contact Michelle Catoni, Disability Special Emphasis Program Manager, at the NRCS San Sebastian Field Office at 787-896-3565 x.105 or michelle.catoni@pr.usda.gov.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

*To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) **mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) **fax:** (202) 690-7442; or (3) **email:** program.intake@usda.gov.*

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.