Ten Tips for Working with Individuals with Disabilities.

1. Be Patient: Accommodate the person by being patient and by altering your training or communication style. You should not lower the standards of the job or your expectations.
2. Be Direct: Individuals with intellectual disabilities don’t typically learn social behavior subtly the way most others learn them. For example, think of things you catch on to by seeing someone roll their eyes, check their watch, even just clear their throat. Some individuals with disabilities would not pick up on those cues. Don’t be afraid to politely say what you mean to a person with cognitive disability. It’s okay to be direct.
3. Adapt to Learning Styles: Learning styles differ for everyone. Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading/writing learners all approach new material differently. Observe the person to see if you can determine their learning style and try to use this when working with them. Or, try giving information in multiple formats (explain, demonstrate, provide a picture or list).
4. Give Feedback: Provide immediate feedback, whether for a task correction or socially inappropriate behavior. Your remark will be closely associated with the behavior that preceded it.
5. Be Specific: Specific feedback is good. For example “I like the way your keep the supplies organized.” Is preferable to “that looks good.” Or, “can you re-wipe that table so that there are no crumbs on it?”
6. Respect: Respect the person’s ability to learn. Don’t assume they will not be able to acquire a new skill or lean appropriate behaviors.
7. Praise: Praise the person you supervise or work with much like you would anyone else. “You did a nice job on that, John,” “Thank you for helping me out, Eve.”
8. Offer to Help: It’s ofay to ask the person if they need assistance. If they say yes, ask how you can assist or offer, “May I open the door for you??”
9. Include: Welcome the person into your office culture in all the ways you would any other new co-worker.
10. Remember, most individuals with disabilities just want to be treated like everybody else.