



The Social Model of Disability

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Some questions to think about:

When you woke up this morning,

Did you experience difficulty/needed assistance for:

- Physically getting out of bed
- Brushing teeth
- Using the bathroom
- Taking a shower
- Getting dressed
- Putting shoes on

On your way to class this morning,

Did you experience difficulty/needed assistance while:

- Entering buildings
- Navigating sidewalks
- Reading street signs
- Using stairs, escalators
- Accessing public transportation
- Accessing public bathrooms



Where is disability located?



Individual/Medical Model

- Personal Tragedy Theory
- Personal Problem
- Individual Treatment
- Individual Identity
- Individual Adaptation
- Deficiency

Social Model

- Social Oppression Theory
- Social Problem
- Social Action
- Collective Identity
- Social Change
- Difference

What disables?

Impairment vs. Disability

Impairment doesn't necessarily lead to disability.

But these do:

- Social, institutional barriers
- Discrimination
- Exclusion
- Inaccessibility
- Ableism



Whom is the world built for?

What does the built environment reveal about dominant social norms?

Example: The deadly consequences of a world built for men; male-focused testing puts women at risk.

Female drivers and right front passengers are approximately

17 percent more likely
to be killed

in a car crash than a male occupant of the same age.

Any seatbelt-wearing female vehicle occupant has

73 percent greater odds of being
seriously injured

in a frontal car crash than the odds of a seatbelt-wearing male occupant being injured in the same kind and severity of crash.

Sources: NHTSA and the journal Traffic Injury Prevention

Source:

<https://www.consumerreports.org/car-safety/crash-test-bias-how-male-focused-testing-puts-female-drivers-at-risk/>



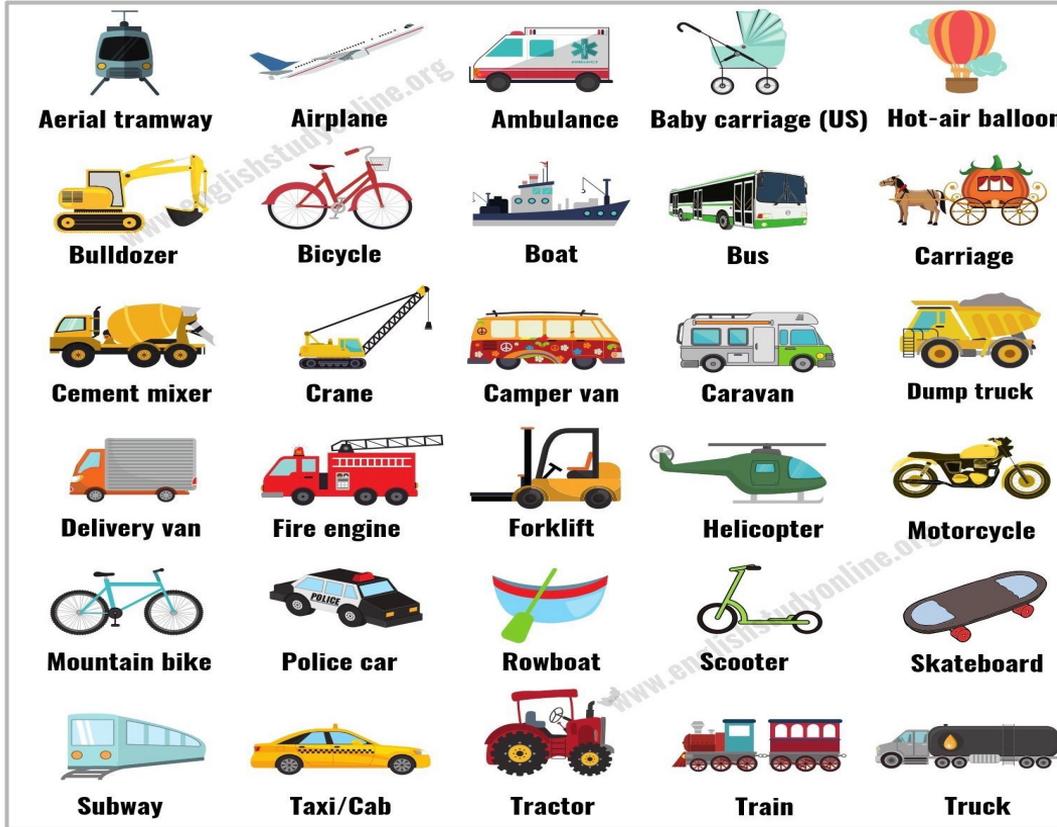
Source:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/feb/23/truth-world-built-for-men-car-crash>

Some mobility devices



Some other mobility devices



Do you use any of these?

How about other assistive technologies and mobility aids like elevators, escalators?

What if you didn't have any of them?



prosthetic

From Ancient Greek *προσθετικός* (prostetikós, “adding; repletive; giving additional power”), from *πρόσθεσις* (prósthesis, “addition”), from *προστίθῃμι* (prostíthēmi, “I add”), from *πρός* (prós, “towards”) + *τίθῃμι* (títhēmi, “I place”).

Source:

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prosthetic>

Prosthetics or not?



They are all prosthetics but...

The items on the left are:

- Normalized
- Widely available
- Affordable
- Fashionable

The items on the right are:

- Stigmatized
- Only found in medical contexts
- Expensive
- Functional

“Without technology, the human body is a pretty limited instrument. We cannot write without a pen or pencil, nor eat hot soup without a bowl and, perhaps, a spoon. And yet, only certain technologies are labeled "assistive technologies": hearing aids, prostheses, wheelchairs. But surely our pens and pencils, bowls and spoons assist us as well. ... **[A]ll bodies are getting assistance, all the time.**”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/12/why-are-glasses-perceived-differently-than-hearing-aids/282005/>

What would a world built on different norms look like?

Homework:

Write a one page sci-fi story of a world where what we consider to be a relative state of non-disability would be at a serious disadvantage.

What kind of world could disable a sighted person for instance?

Next week's Class:

Critiques of the Social Model

- What are the limits of the impairment/disability distinction?
- How can the Social Model account for cognitive disabilities and neuro-normativity?



The disability rights movement, like other social change movements, names systems of oppression as the problem, not individual bodies. In short it is ableism that needs the cure, not our bodies. Rather than a medical cure, we want civil rights, equal access, gainful employment, the opportunity to live independently, good and respectful health care, desegregated education.

(Clare, 2009[1999], pp. 122–123)





What are the advantages of the Social Model?

empowering disabled people
collectivising their struggle
rendering visible the obstacles and systemic oppression they face
identifying possible solutions to eliminate these problems

(Baril, 2015, p.65)

