

Degree[®]

Getting started
on your inclusive
design journey



Unilever



Foreword

Close to 15% of people globally identify as living with a disability, making them the largest under-represented group in the world. Unilever's goal is to become a true mirror to society, with at least 5% representation of people with disabilities within our workforce by 2025. We also strive for better representation in front of and behind the camera, as well as through our product designs.

We ask that every Unilever brand views design through the lens of equity. Design is about so much more than function and beauty. It's a way to feel included and uphold dignity for a group whose needs are not always considered.

So, let's start asking ourselves, "Who are we not currently designing for and how can we amplify their voices and their experiences?" This is how we can create a world free of stereotypes, and an equitable and inclusive society for all.



Aline Santos,
Chief Brand Officer and Chief
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Officer, Unilever.



Acknowledgements

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The document was designed with inclusion in mind by Echo, our strategic design and sustainable innovation partner, creating a better world by design.



Royal College of Art
**THE HELEN HAMLYN
CENTRE FOR DESIGN**



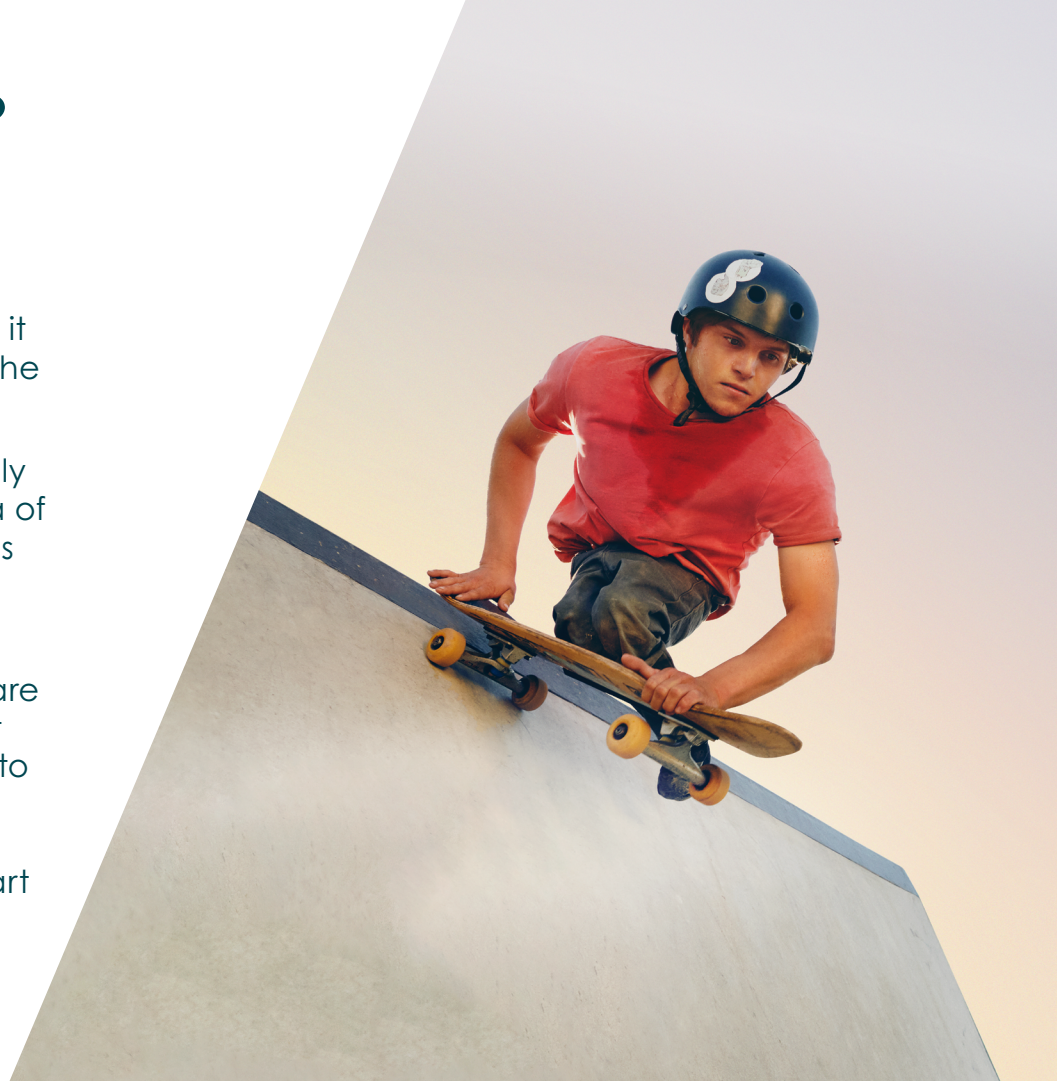
Who is this document for?

This document is designed for anyone who is inspired to start their inclusive design journey.

There are many dimensions to inclusivity, and it is important to be aware of all of them, and the intersectionality between them.

In this document, we have focused specifically on the accessibility of deodorants in the area of physical disability, although some of the ideas will be applicable to a lot of different types of products.

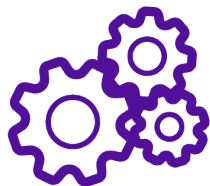
We've been on a journey, and although we are still very much on that journey and have a lot more to do, we have learned a lot. We want to share those learnings for a collectively better approach to inclusive design in the industry and to help others, so they do not have to start from zero.



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of inclusive
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Section 01:

The power of inclusive design



In this section:

- What is inclusive design?
- Dimensions of diversity.
- Why design inclusively?
- The business case for inclusive design.

What is inclusive design?



Inclusive design is a people-centric, integrated design approach to ensure that products, services, technologies and environments fulfil the needs and aspirations of as many people as possible.

By solving for one and extending to many, it means that the design is actually better for all.

It is not an add-on, or a side consideration. It can't be done in isolation, or without engaging with real people throughout the entire design development process.

It reminds us not to simply solve for our own situation and biases, which would exclude a huge range of human difference, but to embrace the diversity of humankind.

Inclusive design also speaks to social sustainability alongside economic and environmental aspects.

It is virtually impossible to design solutions that serve all, but we can design by including many perspectives, creating numerous ways that people can participate and feel included.



Dimensions of diversity



There are so many factors that make each of us unique. From the characteristics qualities that make us who we are, to the external factors that impact us at different times in our lives.

When we talk about inclusion, we mean considering all these factors, and the intersectionality and overlap that exists between them.



Person-centred characteristics:

- Mental / physical ability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or expression
- Race / ethnicity
- Nationality
- Gender
- Age
- Family
- Personal appearance



External factors:

- Language
- Organizational role
- Political factors
- Education level
- Income
- Time
- Place
- Economic factors
- Environmental factors



Why design inclusively?



People with disabilities are too often forced to adapt to products, to find workarounds or hacks, rather than brands adapting to address diverse needs. When people struggle to use products or services, this can lead to discomfort, feelings of exclusion, and a loss of dignity.

It is our responsibility as designers and brand owners, to change the status quo. By opening up to this approach, creativity flourishes, and innovation opportunities arise.

We can choose to enable choice, independence, and delight.



The business case for inclusive design



We know that embarking on an inclusive design journey can be daunting. Stakeholders can worry that the opportunity will be too small, or too difficult. But we have learned that even doing something small can have a big impact.

Through our own journey, we learned that improving things doesn't always need huge investment. We discovered some quick fixes through this process. One example was finding that some of our lids were being produced outside of specification limits. By making a small change, we made our lids easier to open across a core product line.



The business case for inclusive design



Better serve your whole customer base:

There are 1 billion people in the world with disabilities. That's 15% of the population, and they have a spending power of \$8 trillion.*



Create competitive advantage:

Inclusive design aims to make products accessible and easier to use for as many people as possible. That is a benefit for all your customers.



Increase brand equity:

Consumers are more likely to see you as progressive. In an IPSOS survey, 64% of surveyed consumers were more likely to consider or purchase a product after seeing an advert they perceive to be inclusive.



Attract and retain the best talent:

A recent CNBS survey showed that nearly 80% of those surveyed said they wanted to work for a company that values diversity, equity and inclusion.

***Stats from: [The Global Economics of Disability 2020. View full report.](#)
Other stats are from: [CNBC Workforce Wire. View full report.](#)
[The Business Case for Product Inclusion Design Practices. View full report.](#)**



Section 02:

Getting started

In this section:

- Finding expert advisors.
- Nothing about us, without us!
- Identifying exclusion.
- Our experience with research.



Finding expert advisors



Getting started on your inclusive design journey can be a daunting task, but you do not have to go it alone. You can find expert partners who can advise and support you.

- People with lived experience.
- Non-profits & NGOs.
- Universities.
- Advertising, PR, packaging and design agencies.



Participants at a Degree Hackathon 2022



[See page 37 for a list of resources.](#)

Nothing about us, without us!



In inclusive design, we are designing with, or even by people with disabilities.

Be humble and put in the time and effort to understand the challenges, rather than starting with a solution in mind.

Many tools exist to help designers in the studio to imagine the needs and experience of their audience, but nothing can replace the insight you get from engaging with real people.



Group discussion at a Degree Hackathon 2022



Identifying exclusion



Seeing first hand how people shop for and use your product is a great first step. Human beings are very adaptable. Observing the product in use gives insights into hacks and adaptations that have become second nature to the user, and is a way to start to figure out what might be causing exclusion.

Consider the entire experience journey, from manufacture to disposal.

Microsoft's Inclusive Design Toolkit "Inclusive 101" reminds us that not all exclusion comes from something permanent, such as having one arm. It could be temporary, such as a broken arm that will heal in time, or even situational - such as a parent carrying a newborn and doing things one handed.



Microsoft: Inclusive Design

Our experience with research



Traditional research methods often exclude people with disabilities, and the methodology, recruitment and stimulus isn't always designed with people with disabilities in mind. We experienced this first hand, and compiled some key learnings on the way.

Briefing:

Be clear on the type of challenges on which you wish to focus, and don't limit yourself to just existing brand users. Question the level of experience your selected research partner has in doing this type of research.

Ethnographic methods:

Inclusive design is about lived experience, so fieldwork is key, whether that is focus groups, interviews, observations or questionnaires.

Finding participants:

Traditional market research recruiters can help, but expect it to take longer than usual to find the right participants.

You can also leverage your own networks, charity groups and social media.

Check to ensure the language you are using is appropriate to the community you are recruiting from.

Stimulus:

Think about how stimulus is shared, for example for those with visual impairments or motor difficulties, to ensure participants can respond to the research.



Our experience with research



The right setting:

Consider the best location – a curated space or in the participant's home? Would a video call suit better? Consider how best to put people at ease.

Think about what challenges your participants might experience in taking part and ask them what they might need.

When planning group sizes and session lengths, take your participants' needs into account.

Ethics and safeguarding:

Good research practice, ethics and rigour are all important considerations when working with people, especially vulnerable or marginalised groups.



Section 03:

Design



In this section:

- A word on aesthetics.
- Artwork.
- Form.
- Function.

The ideas on the following pages are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive. Thinking along these lines should open your mind to think about other aspects related to your specific product.

A word on aesthetics



Inclusive design is not purely functional, without any consideration for how something looks. Nowhere is that more important to remember than in personal care and beauty.

We found that people did not want to be singled out and feel they have to buy an adaptive product. They want to just buy the same product that everyone else is buying, and have it work for them.

Everybody deserves to have gorgeous items in their bathroom and on their dressing table, that are a pleasure both to look at and to use.



Artwork: Colors



Everyone needs to be able to understand what a product is and how to use it, along with being able to tell different formats and variants apart.

Colors:

- Not everyone sees color the same way. 1 in 12 men and 1 in 200 women experience color blindness, of which there are several forms.
- APCA is a tool you can use to check color contrasts and it is freely available online.
- Using shapes and texture is another good way to convey meaning as well as, or in place of, color.

Text colors and finishes:

Putting text over patterns, gradients, or a reflective background can make it harder to read. A high contrast, solid background color can make text easier to read.

Likewise, text that has a metallic or gloss finish will reflect light, which can make it harder to read.



Artwork: Language



Visual impairment, literacy levels and neurodiversity are just a few of the challenges that can affect how easy reading is for a person, but there are many ways designers can approach text to make it as inclusive as possible.

Some ideas to make content easier to understand:

- Reducing the amount of text and keeping information to a minimum.
- Arranging text in a simple, logical order to aid reading comprehension.
- Using plain, clear and concise language.
- Breaking up large blocks of information with clear headings.

- Supporting text with icons and pictures where appropriate.
- Giving clear, to the point information on product benefits, usage instructions, ingredients, allergens, animal testing, vegan suitability and recycling.
- Describing the fragrance of the product through language or semiotics.



Artwork: Fonts



Fonts:

Sans serif fonts, lower case and sentence case tend to be easier to read than text in capital letters or characters with decorative elements or ligatures.

Try to avoid using multiple fonts in a design.

Size and spacing:

Try to ensure that there is enough spacing between words and letters, and between lines of text, so they are easily readable.

Check that the font size is readable based on your project's accessibility criteria and make sure it is legible in different situations.

Serifs
Text

The word 'Text' is written in a dark teal serif font. The word 'Serifs' is written in a smaller, red sans-serif font above it. Three red circles are drawn around the top and bottom curves of the letters 'T', 'e', and 't' to highlight their decorative features.

Serif Font

Text

The word 'Text' is written in a dark teal sans-serif font.

Sans Serif Font



Artwork: Images and icons



Images and icons:

Millions of people struggle with reading or have a cognitive disability, and rely on images to understand what a product is how to use it safely and for best results.

Icons should be intuitive and easy to understand.

Tactile indicators:

Braille and the cyR.U.S system are examples of raised tactile shapes which help communicate information through touch, and can convey information to people with visual impairments.

However, it is estimated that only around 10% of people with visual impairments can read Braille.



Artwork: Connected packaging



QR codes and text to voice apps:

Several apps can convert text to speech, or can use QR codes to give people more information in spoken form. Putting them at the top and front of pack makes them easier to scan, and a tactile indicator makes them easier to find.



Form: Surface texture and materials



The surface of a product can have a big impact on how easy it is to pick up, hold, and put down again.

Soft touch and rubberised materials have the dual benefit of providing grip, they are also gentler on delicate skin and joints.

They also have thermal properties that create less discomfort than cold hard plastic or aluminum.

Adding texture, curves, ridges or other moulded features can help to improve grip and make it easier to use a product with one hand. This is especially useful on contact areas.



Testing materials at a Degree Hackathon 2022



Form: Shape



Soft, rounded edges can be beneficial to sensitive hands and skin. Straight sided products can be harder to grip than those with curves.

Consider whether the design easily sits on a surface in a stable way, ensuring it doesn't easily topple, or fall on the floor and roll away. It is helpful if a product can be put down on its lid and on its base.

Shape can also help to distinguish between two different products for people with visual impairments. For example, shampoo versus conditioner bottles.



Testing shape at a Degree Hackathon 2022



Form: Size



Consider the weight and dimensions of the product – too heavy and it can be tiring to hold. Too small and it can be easy to drop.

Think about how the product will fit into gym kits or travel bags. For heavier products, packs with a low centre of gravity, or with pumps, can make them easier to use. Where pressure is needed to be applied, such as elements that need to be turned or pushed, larger contact areas allow that pressure to be distributed over a larger surface area.



Testing size at a Degree Hackathon 2022



Function: Opening and closing



As well as picking up and holding products, people need to be able to open, close, and dispense them easily.

Good design should allow products to be gripped, positioned and applied in different ways, rather than restricting the manner of use. Designs that allow different approaches to opening, closing and dispensing are likely to be more inclusive.

Be aware of lids, closures or dispensing mechanisms that require awkward, or repetitive movements, or that require wrists to be flexed or arms to be extended. Likewise, think about whether the lid needs to be finely aligned to remove or replace it.

Consider offering different options, such as flip tops or pump packs. Think about lids that can be removed in different ways, such as pushing them off, hooking them onto an object, or using different parts of the hand.

Think about the level of force needed to open and close.

Can lids be opened with either hand only, or even without the use of hands? Is there a way to avoid the possibility of the lid being dropped?



Function: Dispensing



Consider the force needed to dispense the product, whether that is squeezing a tube, pulling and holding a trigger spray, or pressing and holding down an actuator.

Can this be done with less force? Can it be done with the force applied for a shorter time? Can it be done one handed? Can it continue to dispense even after the force is removed?

Components that need to be turned or pressed can be enlarged to increase their ease of use.



Function: Secondary Packaging



Don't forget about secondary packaging, as it can form another barrier to using the product.

Consider using easy open pull tabs or magnetic openings tabs, for example.

Think about any security seals or quality seals and how people will remove them at first use.

Reducing the number of steps required before you're able to use the product improves the overall user experience.



Testing easy open lid at a Degree Hackathon 2022



Section 04:

Case study: Degree Inc



In this section:

- Degree Inc 1.0.
- Degree Inc 2.0.
- Degree Inc 2.0 prototypes.

Degree Inc 1.0



In 2021 our team embarked on a journey to imagine what an inclusive deodorant could look like. The Degree Inc prototype was our first step on our Inclusive Design journey, and we learned a lot!

We worked with industry experts, occupational therapists, designers, and people with lived experience to create a prototype with a set of potentially beneficial design features.

The Degree Inc prototype sparked a conversation in the industry around inclusion, generated debate and was recognized as a step in the right direction.



Degree Inc 1.0: Our two biggest project learnings



1. One size does not fit all:

There are many sub-groups of users with different needs and pain points. Designing a single pack that works for everyone is extremely challenging. Purposeful personalization is key.



2. Don't single me out:

Our audience want to be considered rather than singled out, or reminded of their disability. Like everyone else, they want beautiful products that work for them, and they want the same choice other consumers enjoy, such as the fragrance or format.



Degree Inc 2.0



We realised we needed to pivot. A one-size-fits-all mindset doesn't work. That is why, for the next step in our journey, we have been working on a set of accessible accessories that work with our current packs, for a customizable, personalized solution.

We recruited a panel of participants who have all encountered different challenges when using deodorant. In a series of hackathons, these participants worked alongside our engineers, designers and the project team to develop the next iteration.

The result was this set of 4 accessories. They can be used in multiple ways, and the breadth of options means they offer benefits for a wide range of people.



Sketches from a Degree Hackathon 2022



The Degree Inc 2.0 prototypes



Accessory 1: How does it work

This accessory features a loop to aid in lid removal. Slide your fingers or arm into the loop to pull the lid off. Alternatively, you can use a hook or door handle to help remove the lid.



Accessory 2: How does it work

This accessory features moulded ridges that add grip to the lid to make it easier to remove.



The Degree Inc 2.0 prototypes



Accessory 3 : How does it work

This accessory features protruding wings on the lid to make it easier to remove with one hand. While holding the pack, use your thumb or a hard surface to push off the lid.



Accessory 4 : How does it work

This accessory features paddles on the base to make it easier to push the product up with one hand. While holding the pack, use your thumb or a hard surface to rotate the base of the pack to dispense the product.



Section 05:

Resources

In this section:

- Links to resources.



Resources



Places where we can go for information, inspiration and insight.

Guidelines and toolkits:

Apple. Inclusion – Foundations – Human Interface Guidelines – Design.

[View resource](#)

British Standards Institution (2005) Design Management Systems – Part 6: Managing Inclusive Design - Guide (BS 700006:2005). London: BSI Group.

Cards for Humanity.

[View resource](#)

Design Council (2006). The Principles of Inclusive Design.

[View resource](#)

Inclusive Design Standards (2019).

[View resource](#)

Innovate UK (2022). Inclusive Design Guide.

[View resource](#)

Microsoft Inclusive Design Toolkit.

[View resource](#)

Packaging Digest: 7 principles.

[View resource](#)

Product Design Scotland inclusive principles.

[View resource](#)

Tarot Cards of Tech.

[View resource](#)

University of Cambridge. Inclusive Design Toolkit.

[View resource](#)



Resources



Organisations:

Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design project archive

[View resource](#)

Access Israel

[View resource](#)

Cambridge University. Engineering Design Centre.

Inclusive Design Group

[View resource](#)

Design for All Europe.

[View resource](#)

Global Disability Innovation Hub

[View resource](#)

Critical Axis

[View resource](#)

The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design

[View resource](#)



**Good luck on your
inclusive design
journey, we're excited
to continually level
up together!**



Thank you

We'd like to thank the packaging, brand and R&D teams across Unilever who have contributed not only to the contents of this document, but to our progress as a business around championing more inclusive design practices.

We'd also like to extend a special thanks to participants from the disability community.

We would also like to thank Crux, our engineering and design partners, who helped us gain so much first hand experience of accessible design.

