



NLLRC Staff October 2015

What is Second Life®?

Second Life is a virtual world that was created by Linden Lab in 2003. What is a virtual world? It is similar to the real world we live in except it is accessed by a computer. People are represented as avatars which are digital versions of themselves. The interesting thing about a Second Life avatar is that you can represent yourself however you like. For example, you can represent yourself with or without an amputation. You can choose whether or not you want your avatar to use a prosthetic device or a wheelchair.

In Second Life, you have the ability to explore and interact with the virtual world just as you would explore the real world. The difference is that you do not have to leave your home to do so. You are not bound by barriers such as a lack of transportation or difficulty in walking around. You can go for a walk or participate in book clubs, support groups, dance parties and/or socialization events. You can swim, dance and zip line. Live concerts and presentations are held in Second Life. Visually, it is similar to an online game but there are no objectives or goals to guide your use. The possibilities are endless. Second Life can be used as a tool to interact and socialize with your peers.

You can spend as much or as little time as you want exploring the virtual world around you. A virtual world, like Second Life, provides an opportunity for real-time interaction with others. When you sign into Second Life, you instantly have the ability to interact with others who are “inworld” at the same time you are. You might even have the opportunity to communicate with an amputee living in another country. The best part of this virtual world experience is, **it's free!**

How do I sign up?

The Amputee Coalition is working closely with Virtual Ability, a nonprofit corporation specializing in connecting individuals with a disability to support resources in virtual worlds like Second Life®. It is recommended that you use Virtual Ability's orientation materials if you are interested in joining Second Life. You can sign up for Second Life on their Web site, virtualability.org/sign-up-for-second-life. From that Web page, you will be directed through the free account creation process, and you will make your basic avatar.

A computer or laptop with at least 512 MB of RAM, a powerful video card, and a high-speed internet connection is necessary to participate in Second Life. You can communicate inworld by typing on the keyboard or by using a headset and/or microphone to communicate by voice.

After signing up for an avatar, you have the opportunity to participate in an orientation where you will learn how to walk, fly, change your hair and clothes, and communicate with those around you. Virtual Ability has a thorough

orientation packet that will be helpful as you get started in world. Contact Virtual Ability at info@virtualability.org to obtain information about their orientation materials. Virtual Ability provides mentors who can meet you in Second Life and help to answer any questions you might have. At the end of the orientation, you will be able to go straight to the Virtual Health Adventures Island and explore!

What is available for the limb loss community in Second Life®?

The Amputee Coalition is working with Dr. Sandra Winkler of the Virtual Health Adventures project as well as Virtual Ability (virtualability.org) to offer a virtual world experience to the limb loss community. Dr. Winkler is conducting a study examining the use of avatars in teaching amputees to use their prosthetic devices within the virtual world. As a component of her study, Dr. Winkler has created a special area for amputees. Called the “Virtual Health Adventures Island,” this space has a prosthetic device museum, a central gathering space where meetings are held, a library, and an auditorium seating area for presentations. This part of the island is open to anyone who would like to explore Second Life.

A virtual support group for amputees meets regularly in Second Life. The support group is continually looking for new members to participate in their activities. The support group takes place on the Virtual Health Adventures Island and is led by Jim (JamesBBK in Second Life), a certified peer visitor with the Amputee Coalition. He can be contacted at j.mercier@mail.com for more information. The virtual support group is an exciting opportunity for those with limited access to transportation or support groups in their communities. Support is now available, right at your fingertips, without ever leaving your home!

For a peek into what Second Life and the Virtual Health Adventures Island looks like, take a look at this video by Dr. Winkler’s team: [Virtual Support and Education through Second Life](#). The video also contains contact information for Dr. Winkler, if you are interested in participating in the research study, and for the virtual support group.

Additionally, you may find someone you connect with who might have had a stroke, or who lives with multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy. Regardless of their disability, you can meet and befriend people from all walks of life. In your conversations, you might learn something about coping skills that you can apply to your own life. Second Life is an opportunity for socialization and support that is accessible for anyone with a computer and an Internet connection. Second Life would be a great fit for someone who is looking for peer support but might not live near a support group.

How is Second Life® different from the Amputee Coalition’s Facebook community?

The benefit of a virtual world experience is that it happens in real time. It offers an opportunity to interact with others in a medium similar to a live chat room. It differs a bit from the Facebook community in that you are communicating with others who are in Second Life at the same time. While you might post something on the Amputee Coalition’s Facebook page and wait for a response from others, in Second Life you are communicating live with another person or a group of people. Second Life is navigated through your avatar. You can see your avatar interacting with the world around it. Visualizing your avatar participating in activities and support opportunities can have a positive impact on your emotional and physical recovery.

Quick links to locations on the Virtual Health Adventures Island in Second Life®

After creating your avatar and getting comfortable with your surroundings, take some time to explore the Virtual Health Adventures Island.

Once you are logged into Second Life, copy and paste the following links into your Second Life Web address bar to quickly explore different areas of the island.

- Virtual Health Adventures Prosthetic Device Museum:
<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Health%20Adventures%20I/78/155/39>
- Virtual Health Adventures Support Group Location:
<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Health%20Adventures%20I/69/161/32>
- Virtual Health Adventures Presentation – “Virtual Support and Education Through the Second Life Virtual World” (presented at the Amputee Coalition National Conference in Tucson, Arizona on July 24, 2015)
<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Health%20Adventures%20I/164/157/24>
- Virtual Health Adventures Personal Watercraft (commonly referred to as a “Jet Ski®”)
Are you ready for an exciting adventure? After teleporting to the link below, **right-click your mouse** on the personal watercraft in front of you and click on Drive! in the list of options.
<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Health%20Adventures%20I/70/72/22>

If you have additional questions about Second Life® or other support resources, please contact the Limb Loss Resource Center at 888/267-5669 or visit the Web site at amputee-coalition.org.