

20 SIMPLE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR BUSINESS MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES



Getting To Your Business

Clear clutter or snow away from walkways and accessible parking access aisles. Trim trees and bushes near your business so that there are no low hanging hazards for people who have vision impairments. Trim overgrown trees, shrubs, and bushes that might obstruct the path of travel for people with mobility or vision impairments.

Entrances

Accessible entrances with ramps and automatic doors allow customers with mobility devices (and parents with strollers) to enter easily. Add signage to denote accessible entrance access, accessible parking, or other accessible features.

If your place of business is not accessible for wheelchair users because there is stair access only, consider how you can provide the goods and services to your customers through online orders, postal delivery, curbside delivery, home delivery, or home visit services.



Post accessible features on your website and on TheAbilityApp.com.



Doors

If a door is heavy and hard to open, adjust door closers so that people with mobility impairments can open the door easily.

Serving Counters

Offer an accessible customer service counter top or table top with a countertop height of no more than 34 inches (86.36 cm). Keep the counter and surrounding area free of clutter.



Reach new customers by showing people what accessible features your business offers with your own photos and comments on Ability App. Visit TheAbilityApp.com to add your business info!

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High Visibility

Mark corners, edges, and steps with high visibility contrasting colored material so that people with vision impairments can see them.

Seating

Make sure you have accessible seating for wheelchair users.

For seating at a table:

- Is the table height 34" maximum (86.36 cm), 28" minimum (71.12 cm)?
- Is there knee clearance 27" minimum (68.58 cm) from floor to bottom of table surface)?
- Does the knee clearance extend at least 19" (48.26 cm) under the table?
- Is there a clear floor area of 30" by 48" (76.2 cm by 121.92 cm) surrounding each seating area?
- There must be a 36" (91.44 cm) wide clear path to and from accessible seating options to ensure an individual utilizing a mobility device is able to navigate the space effectively. Rearranging tables (if not attached to the floor) to provide more space in between allows individuals using mobility devices to safely navigate the business.



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Signage

Signs for offices, hotel rooms and restrooms must have braille, raised lettering, and a high contrast background and foreground lettering or graphics. Signs should also be hung in the appropriate location, as signs that are located on doors that swing out can harm individuals standing in front of the door when they are trying to read the sign.

Restrooms

Make bathrooms accessible by keeping wastebaskets or other objects out of pathways. In accessible wheelchair stalls, keep the area around the toilet and under the sink clear. Allow plenty of room to maneuver a wheelchair within the stall. Lower coat hooks, paper towel dispensers, hand dryers, and soap dispensers so that wheelchair users and people who are small in stature can utilize them.



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Service Animals

Welcome service animals to your establishment. A service animal is "any guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability."

Create a service animal relief area on your property, if possible. Post signage on your establishment welcoming service animals and denote where your service animal relief area is by posting a sign in your store and by posting accessibility information on your website.

Not sure if your patron has a service animal? Ask these questions:

1. Do you need this animal because of a disability?
2. What tasks or work has this animal been trained to perform?

Telecommunication Relay Service

People who are deaf make phone calls using a telecommunications relay service (TRS). TRS (also known as IP-relay or Web-based relay service) is an operator service that allows people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, or have a speech disorder to place calls to standard telephone users via a keyboard or assistive device. Treat these calls the same way you would treat other calls.



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Emergency Evacuation Plan

In an emergency, include an evacuation plan on how to evacuate people with disabilities. Educate your employees about the procedure.

Make sure that your signage also has braille.

Greeting Customers

When speaking with a person with a disability who has a companion, address the person with a disability, not the companion – unless specifically instructed otherwise by the person with a disability.



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Printed Materials



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Menus can be printed with 12-14 font size to improve the overall readability for individuals with low vision. Also, offering menus that aren't laminated ensures there is no glare projecting off of the menu.

In addition to having written menus and printed informational materials on hand, having braille on menus and large print signage will help people who have a vision impairment.

Menus can also be posted online for customers to access (using assistive technology such as screen readers) before they visit the business. Offer online ordering, if possible. Also, include photos on your menus to make it easier for customers who may be deaf-mute to indicate what they would like to order.

Customer Service

Employees can offer to read written documents to blind patrons or patrons who have low vision. Also, employees should be aware of how to properly communicate specific directions, if asked by a customer. When an employee is asked for directions to the bathroom, the employee should not simply point in the direction of the bathroom but should indicate the approximate distance as well as the direction to the requested location. For customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have difficulty speaking, have a pad of paper ready to communicate more effectively.



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Extra Time

Customers with vision, hearing, or speech impairments might need a little extra time or a quiet area to talk with employees.

Be aware that extra time might be required to understand what is being communicated and how you might be able to help.



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Ask First

Always ask the person with a disability first if they need help, don't assume that they need assistance.

If a person with a vision impairment needs help locating a product or space, ask them if they would like assistance. Offer them your arm for guidance. Wait for them to accept the assistance. Never grab the handle of a service animal or try to lead your patron's service animal.

Always ask a wheelchair user if they would like assistance. Never push their wheelchair without asking if it's alright to do so first.



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Pool / Spa Lift

If you have a pool or spa lift at your business, make sure it is working properly.

Check to see that the lift is uncovered and the battery is charged so that it is ready for people to use during pool hours.

Sensitivity Training

Educate your employees on disability etiquette. Use people first language when referring to someone with a disability. Refer to a person as an individual with a disability rather than a “disabled person” or a “handicapped person.” Refer to a person as a wheelchair user, rather than one “confined” to a wheelchair. Refer to a person by saying that they are blind or visually impaired, rather than one who “suffers” from blindness.

Educating staff on the needs of people with disabilities can break down barriers. Providing your staff with training on topics such as how to assist people with vision, cognitive, hearing and mobility impairments, interact with service animals, etc, will ensure that everyone is informed on how to best serve and include all people.



Environment: Sounds, Odors, Lighting and Crowds



Be cognizant of customers who might have sensitivities to loud sounds (offer to turn down the music or move them to a quiet area), strong odors (offer to open a window or seat them at a different location), flashing lights (offer to turn off the light or move them to another area), or large crowds (offer patron a quiet area or perhaps recommend times of the day to visit your establishment when it isn't as crowded).

Dimly lit establishments might make it hard for people with vision impairments to read a menu or make it difficult for people with hearing impairments to either hear or read the lips of their companions. Offer to move them to a space that might have brighter lighting or offer to turn up the lights.

Captioning

If videos play at your business, be sure to turn on closed captioning for your patrons. When producing videos for your business, don't forget to add closed captioning.

When captioning images on social media, don't forget to add a caption for users with vision impairments, so that they can enjoy social media, too.



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