



EASY ACCESS: QUICK WINS

Access is much more than doorways and ramps. Attitudes, information, knowledge and confidence are also gateways to access. “We’d love to provide access but we have no budget,” is something we hear a lot! Here are free or low cost ways to make places, programs and events more accessible, and give you a quick win.

- Stop using cost as an excuse for not providing access or putting it in the “too hard basket.”
- Make sure your budget includes access considerations—this means including access ideas at the early planning stage.
- Include ‘access’ and ‘disability’ in your business plan.
- Discuss ‘access’ at team meetings or project meetings, keep it on your agenda and encourage staff to share their experience.
- Form partnerships with other groups or organisations so as to share plans, ideas, costs, equipment, etc.
- Always look for accessible venues.
- Something simple: If a water fountain is too high, add a cup dispenser next to it.
- A door can be made to open and close easily by adjusting the pressure of the closer at the top.
- If the door to your main entrance is hard to open, have a doorbell that people can ring for assistance—make sure there is a clear sign to show this.
- Use matt papers for printing program books or brochures, rather than glossy or shiny papers. Glossy papers can be hard to see for people who are blind or have low vision.
- Train your staff or volunteers to introduce themselves. A person who is blind or has low vision may not be able to see or read a badge.

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- When you recruit volunteers or staff ask for any access-related skills, such as Auslan, audio description, confidence interacting with people with disability, or disability awareness training.
 - Ensure your staff and volunteers are trained in disability awareness.
 - Staff should be able to help any customers who have a disability by showing them the best access and easiest ways of getting around a facility.
 - A portable ramp can be purchased or rented, to help provide access into a building with a step to the entrance, or on to a stage or podium.
 - Provide lapel microphones for presenters rather than a microphone at a lectern.
 - Ask first! Consultation is a great way to understand what patrons and visitors with disability require most. Ask your visitors or members with disability for their feedback or contact a local disability organisation to get an idea of how accessible your facility really is.
 - The height of a toilet can be made more accessible if it has an adjustable seat.
 - A table can be used as a reception counter or information desk, so a person using a wheelchair can fit comfortably beneath it, or a person of short stature can reach items.
 - Many people have red/green color blindness, so try and avoid using red and green together on your printed and electronic flyers or promotional material.
 - Encourage people to ask for help and assistance at your facility or event when they arrive and actively encourage their feedback on how welcoming you were and ways you can improve.
 - Focus on giving great customer service that includes everyone. Customer service trumps access every time!
 - Form an advisory or reference group of people with disability from the community who can advise and assist you plan around access to your event.
 - If your counter areas (e.g. reception, ticketing) are too high for someone in a wheelchair to use, keep a clipboard available for transactions and writing on. This can assist with communicating with people who are Deaf or non-verbal communicators.
 - If there is a hearing loop available, make sure there is a clear sign that shows this service is available.
 - Make sure you have a sign at your entrance, and in your reception area or foyer to show where the nearest accessible toilet is in the building.
 - Check your accessible toilet and hallways are not used for storage space (even temporarily).
 - If you use the Try Booking system for ticketing, request they make available an 'access requirements' section in the booking form.
 - Provide several ways for people to be able to book or purchase tickets including online, SMS and phone. Providing choice allows people to select the option that suits their disability requirements best.
 - Your accessible toilet should be easy to use and not require a key to get into.
 - Keep a communication board at your reception or information/service counter. SCOPE (Vic) offer many free communication aids such as communication boards which can be used at reception or front of house: www.scopeaust.org.au/service/communication-aids-resources. iPad communication apps work well. Keep one on hand for the public to use.
 - A 'wand' can be placed in a lift where the buttons are too high to reach—make sure there is a sign on the outside of the lift to let people know it's there.
 - Improve lighting in dark areas.

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- If someone is hard to understand—take your time. It’s OK to ask someone to repeat themselves or use a notepaper and pen (keep one handy).
 - Install handles that are easy to use on both sides of the doors of wheelchair accessible toilets.
 - Invite disability service organisations (e.g. for people who are blind) to use your facility or venue for orientation training. This will give you excellent feedback on access (e.g. lighting, signage, clear passageways, etc) for people who are blind or have low vision.
 - Keep paths and passageways clear for easy access for a person who uses a wheelchair, rides a scooter, pushes a pram, or has low vision.
 - Position artwork labels at a height that can be read by person of short stature or someone who is sitting.
 - Print artwork labels and exhibition information in large print, or have a large print version available for people to pick up.
 - Put up clear signs that show people what access services you have. Promote it widely and prominently—everyone will be encouraged to attend.
 - Make sure your access information is prominent on your website—not more than two or three ‘clicks’ away!
 - Offer extra discounts on unsold seats to people who are on a disability support payment—promote this out to disability networks.
 - Make sure soap dispensers and paper towels are at a height that can easily be reached.
 - Use pump style soap dispensers.
 - Consider presenting pre-show Tactile or Touch Tours for audience members who are blind or have a vision impairment: <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-touchtools.shtml>.
 - When you book a touring show, ask if there are tactile tour or audio description materials available as part of the production.
 - Have publicity materials and programs on lower counters and tables for easy access.
 - Let people know if you offer Companion Card, Arts Access Victoria membership, or other concessions.
 - Put up clear signs to show where the most accessible paths of travel are both inside and outside a building.
 - When you negotiate new contracts with suppliers—for example IT, website design and marketing—ensure ‘accessibility’ is in the brief and part of contract discussions.
 - Print programs, playbills and materials in large print—Ariel 12–18 point. Photocopies are fine.
 - Provide maps of the most accessible way to your venue. Include placement of public transport and accessible parking bays.
 - If access in your venue is limited, tell people, so they can decide whether they want to attend or not. This avoids any disappointment.
 - Use the International Access Symbols on all your promotions and publications <http://artsaccess.com.au/access-program/access-symbols/>. This gives people ‘access at a glance’ about what’s on offer.
 - Offer to provide scripts to performances in advance for people to read.
 - Place strips of fluorescent yellow tape along the edge of steps or anywhere there is a change in floor level.
 - Put non-slip material on slippery floor surfaces—but make sure this would not make it harder to

wheel a wheelchair across.

- Train staff so they are confident speaking to patrons who are Deaf or hard of hearing, for example: speak to the person not the interpreter. Remind them to face the person front on in case the person lip reads.
- Improve lighting by replacing low wattage light bulbs with high wattage bulbs.
- Replace round door knobs with levered handles.
- Promote audio described performances to patrons who are blind or have low vision to a targeted audience. More information here: <http://artsaccess.com.au> and <http://www.visionaustralia.org/living-with-low-vision/learning-to-live-independently/sport-recreation-and-the-arts/audio-description>. Use established networks and ensure this becomes a regular part of your marketing.
- Target to specific audiences. Advertise events or performances to networks of people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. More information here: <http://artsaccess.com.au/deaf-arts-network>. Use established networks and ensure this becomes a regular part of your marketing.
- Ensure maximum circulation space for wheelchairs by arranging seating and tables in the foyer or gallery to allow a wheelchair use to pass through easily.
- Allow for higher chairs that are easy to stand up from.
- Train your front-of-house staff and those who take bookings or enquiries how to use the National Relay Service (NRS) for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. NRS provides free training. <http://relayservice.gov.au/>
- Offer to provide information in formats such as tapes, CDs or large print, available on request.
- Ask for feedback about your accessibility. Do this in easy-to-read forms, or ask people and take notes. Build this into your regular feedback and improvement processes.
- Use high contrast paint colors between walls and floors, on skirting boards, around windows and doors to help people with low vision find their way around.
- Vary the heights of the seating in your foyer and include chairs with, and without arms.
- Use high-contrast colors on labels for art work—white on black, or black on white.
- Always ensure your accessible parking bay out the front is not blocked to people with disability.
- Be aware of the work of artists with disability in all areas of the arts. An artist with disability or an inclusive theatre company may fit into and enhance your program.
- Have a plain English version of a synopsis of the play available at the box office. Plain English guidelines are available from SCOPE (Aust) and the Communication Resource Centre offers an advisory service: www.scopeaust.org.au/service/accessible-informations

Image: Cinema accessibility protest 2010. Photo by Paul Dunn.

References: Oregon Arts Commission's Accessibility for Under \$100