

# DISABILITY INCLUSION TOOLKIT



OPEN  
TO ALL



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For millions of Americans, the ability to access disability accommodations when dining or doing business can determine whether they can fully participate in society or whether they instead experience marginalization and a loss of autonomy.

[Nearly one in four adults in the United States](#) are living with some form of disability – vision, hearing, ambulatory, self-care related to bathing, cognitive, or difficulty with independent living tasks such as doing errands alone. Meanwhile, benefits of accommodations required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other disability inclusion efforts are poised to reach a growing number of people, as our society ages and the presence of disability grows as a result of conditions such as long COVID.

Businesses must be ready to embrace people with disabilities who are already a part of their customer base. And we must all be ready to accept that if we are lucky enough to live a long life, disability will become a regular presence in our day-to-day experiences.

The benefits of accessibility measures in businesses are enormous and take nothing away from those who do not have a disability. Accessibility improves quality of life for all members of society, including the friends, families, and co-workers of those who live with disability by allowing for their fullest possible participation in everyday life. And finally, business stands to thrive by being more inclusive: companies identified [as Disability Inclusion Leaders](#) by Disability:In, Accenture, and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) yielded 1.6 times more revenue, 2.6 times more net income, and twice as much economic profit.





# PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES

## No steps or stairs

About 8% (18.4 million) of all adults use a cane, crutches, or a walker to assist with mobility, and 2.3% (5.5 million) use a wheelchair, according to [U.S. Census data](#).

Removing barriers, such as steps and stairs, allows more people to access an establishment. For businesses with multiple stories or raised entrances, there are a few ways to improve accessibility, such as:

- **Ramps:** Stairs and steps can be replaced with ramps with a gentle slope. Establishments should ensure that ramps have non-slip surfaces and railings on both sides for support.
- **Elevators:** For multi-level buildings, consider installing an elevator to ensure access to all areas of the establishment.

It's important that these standards are met throughout an establishment, not just at the entrance and exit. Once inside an establishment, guests and employees with disabilities should be met with step-free pathways to all other areas, including restrooms, shopping and dining areas, dressing rooms, and aisles. This allows people with mobility disabilities to browse merchandise or enjoy a meal without restrictions.

There are benefits for everyone: the absence of stairs and steps reduces the risk of trips, slips, and falls for all customers. Plus, step-free designs enable quick and efficient entry and exit, which are especially important in emergencies.



Source: [Disabled And Here](#)

# PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES

## Make sure the main entrance is ADA-compliant

A seamless entry sets the tone for a positive customer experience. With [over 23.9 million American adults](#) relying on assistive mobility devices, every establishment must have at least one accessible entrance readily available for those who use wheelchairs, walkers, canes, scooters, or other mobility aids. For adults aged 65 and older, the need for an accessible entrance increases exponentially. This age group uses a cane, crutches, or walker at a rate [five times that of adults aged 18 and 64 years](#), and they use a wheelchair about four times as often.

The ADA requires at least 60% of public entrances (excluding those that are restricted or used solely as service entrances) to be accessible in newly constructed buildings. There are several ways to ensure an ADA-compliant entrance, depending on one's specific space:

### For New Construction

- **Ramps:** If a ramp is used to access an entrance or exit, the slope should not exceed 1:12 (one inch rise for every 12 inches of horizontal length).
- **Handrails:** Ramps with a rise exceeding six inches or a horizontal projection greater than 72 inches must have handrails installed on both sides. The handrails should be graspable with a diameter of 1 1/4 inches to 1 1/2 inches and extend at least 12 inches beyond the top and bottom of the ramp for ease of use.
- **Doorway width:** The doorway of the accessible entrance needs to be a minimum of 32 inches in clear width when the door is fully open to allow for comfortable maneuvering of mobility devices.
- **Thresholds:** Door thresholds must not exceed 1/2 inch in height. If the threshold is greater than 1/4 inch, it should be beveled with a slope not steeper than 1:2.
- **Automatic doors:** While not mandatory, automatic doors or low-energy door openers are highly recommended because they eliminate the need for manual operation. Consider installing buttons at accessible heights.

# PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES

## For Existing Buildings

- **Removable ramps:** Consider installing removable ramps over existing steps to create a temporary accessible entrance.
- **Door modifications:** Widen doorways to meet the minimum clearance requirements and ensure easy maneuvering of wheelchairs and walkers.

## Additional Considerations

- **Signage:** If the main entrance is not accessible, clear signage must be provided to direct individuals to the nearest accessible entrance. Consider braille or raised lettering for visually impaired guests.
- **Level pathways:** Ensure a level pathway leads from the accessible entrance to the main entrance of your establishment.
- **Door hardware:** Door handles, pulls, latches, and locks should be operable with one hand and not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist. Lever-operated mechanisms, push-type mechanisms, and U-shaped handles are recommended.
- **Surface:** The walking surface of the accessible entrance should be slip-resistant to ensure safety.
- **Adequate lighting:** Ensure that the entrance and surrounding areas are well-lit to improve visibility for all individuals, including those with visual impairments.
- **Emergency exits:** Ensure that emergency exits are also accessible. They should provide a clear and safe route for individuals with disabilities to exit the building in the event of an emergency.

Specific requirements may vary depending on factors such as the type of building, existing structures, and available space. Consulting with an architect or professional experienced with ADA regulations is recommended to ensure your main entrance is compliant.

# RESTROOMS SHOULD BE ADA-COMPLIANT

## Meeting basic needs: Restrooms should be ADA-compliant

For many people with disabilities, using a restroom independently can be a challenge. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) found that 3.6 percent of U.S. adults have a self-care disability with difficulty dressing or bathing. ADA-compliant bathrooms address this by providing essential features, such as grab bars and accessible toilet heights, allowing individuals with mobility limitations to navigate the restroom without assistance.

Every establishment with public restrooms must have at least one accessible restroom usable by individuals with mobility limitations. This restroom should be well marked and easily identifiable. Here are some ways to ensure a bathroom is accessible to all:

### Entrances and Doors

- **Doorways:** Like the main entrance, a restroom doorway needs to be a minimum of 32 inches wide to allow for wheelchair maneuvering. Entry ways should include at least 18 inches of clear wall space on the pull side of the door, alongside the latch.
- **Hardware:** Door handles must be operable with one hand and not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist. Lever-style handles or automatic doors are recommended.

### Interior Space

- **Minimum size:** The accessible restroom must be large enough to allow a person using a wheelchair to maneuver comfortably. The minimum recommended size is 60 inches wide by 56 inches deep (measured from the wall opposite the door).
- **Clear space:** Provide adequate turning space within the restroom for a wheelchair user. There must be clear floor space in front of toilets, sinks, and grabs; a common approach is a 5-foot diameter floor space.

# RESTROOMS SHOULD BE ADA-COMPLIANT

## Fixtures and Equipment

- **Accessible toilet:** Toilets should have a seat height between 17 and 19 inches from the finished floor. Flush controls should be operable with one hand and mounted no higher than 44 inches above the floor.
- **Grab bars:** Grab bars should be installed 33 to 36 inches above the floor and must be securely anchored to support at least 250 pounds.
- **Accessible urinal:** Urinals should be mounted no higher than 17 inches from the floor. To accommodate wheelchair access, a clear floor space of at least 30 inches by 48 inches in front of the urinal is required.
- **Accessible stall:** At least one stall should be wheelchair accessible, measuring at least 60 inches wide and 56 inches deep for wall-mounted toilets or 59 inches deep for floor-mounted toilets. If six or more stalls are provided, at least one should be an ambulatory accessible stall, measuring 36 inches wide with grab bars on both sides.
- **Accessible sink:** A sink with a clear knee space underneath should be installed no higher than 34 inches above the floor. Faucets should be easy to use with one hand. Lever, push, touch, or sensor-operated faucets are recommended.
- **Accessible dispensers:** Soap dispensers and hand dryers should be mounted no higher than 48 inches from the floor and operable with one hand without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist.

## Additional Considerations

- **Mirrors and Hooks:** Mount mirrors, coat hooks and towel hooks at an accessible height.
- **Emergency call button:** Consider installing an emergency call button for added safety.
- **Baby changing station:** Include a changing station for families with young children.
- **Signage:** Maintain clear signage identifying the accessible restroom and its features.



# ACCESSIBLE PARKING NEAR THE ENTRANCE

## Provide accessible parking near the entrance

Many individuals with disabilities rely on accessible parking spaces to navigate the world independently. For these individuals, long distances from parking lots to entrances can be a significant obstacle. Businesses may attract more consumers and employees with disabilities by providing accessible parking nearby. Here's how:

**Proximity to entrance:** Accessible parking spaces should be located as close as possible to the nearest accessible entrance, minimizing the distance individuals with disabilities need to travel.

**Clear route:** Ensure that there is an accessible route from the parking spaces to the entrance. This route should be at least 36 inches wide and free of steps or steep slopes. If there are changes in elevation, install ramps that comply with ADA slope requirements (no steeper than 1:12). Provide curb cuts and ramps where necessary to transition smoothly from the parking area to the sidewalk or entrance.

**Required spaces:** ADA guidelines [specify the required number of accessible spaces](#) per total parking spots available.

**Accessible design:** Accessible parking spaces should be at least 8 feet wide, with adjacent access aisles that are at least 5 feet wide. For van-accessible spaces, the space should be at least 11 feet wide with a 5-foot access aisle, or 8 feet wide with an 8-foot access aisle.

**Signage:** Accessible parking spaces must display the International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA) both on the ground and with a vertical sign. Signs should be mounted high enough to be visible when a vehicle is parked in space, typically at least 60 inches above the ground.

# ACCESSIBLE PARKING NEAR THE ENTRANCE

In some settings, restaurants or stores may not be able to provide parking nearby. There are a variety of alternative parking solutions that these establishments can consider instead.

**Valet parking:** Offer free valet parking for customers. This service eliminates the need for them to navigate from a parking space to the entrance. Valet attendants should be trained to assist customers with disabilities, handle mobility devices, and operate accessible vehicles safely.

**Curbside assistance:** Create a designated drop-off zone near the entrance where customers with disabilities can be dropped off safely and comfortably. Provide staff to assist customers as they arrive, helping with mobility devices and ensuring they can safely reach the entrance.

**Parking reservations:** Implement an online reservation system that allows customers to book accessible parking spots ahead of time.

**Shuttles:** Provide shuttle services with accessible vehicles to transport customers from remote parking areas to the entrance. Shuttles should run frequently during all business hours to accommodate customer needs.

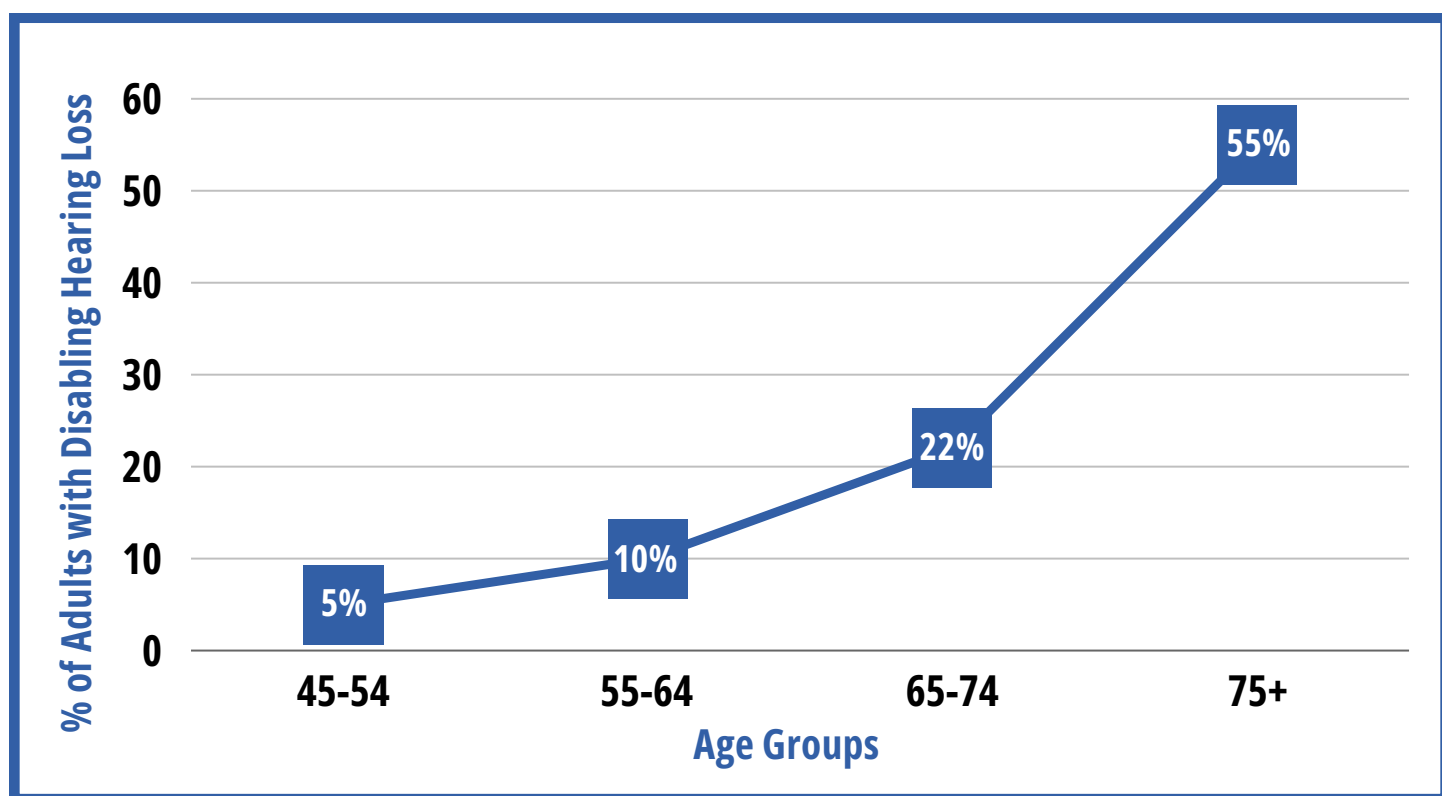
Source: [Disabled And Here](#)



# ACCOMMODATING THOSE WITH HEARING LOSS

## Closed captioning on TVs

Approximately 15% of Americans – or 37.5 million – ages 18 and over report some difficulty hearing. It's a population that increases with age. About 5% of adults ages 45-54 have disabling hearing loss. The rate increases to 10% for adults ages 55-64, rises to 22% of those ages 65-74, and reaches 55% of those who are age 75 and older have disabling hearing loss.



Closed captioning provides both groups with access to the same information that audio conveys to hearing customers. This includes news updates, sports scores, weather forecasts, and other televised content. By reading the captions, customers with hearing loss can stay informed and enjoy the content being displayed. However, closed captioning also improves the experience for those without hearing difficulties by allowing everyone to understand what's displayed on a screen when an environment is too loud for anyone to hear anything or when a common area, such as a waiting room, is preferred to be quiet. Younger consumers, in particular, are proving to be enthusiastic users of closed captioning. Four out of five of those aged 18-25 said they use subtitles all or part of the time, according to [Stagetext/Sapio Research](#).



# ACCOMMODATING THOSE WITH HEARING LOSS

## ASL proficiency

Restaurants with American Sign Language (ASL) proficiency can significantly enhance the dining experience for deaf and hard-of-hearing customers through various means:

**ASL fluent staff:** Employing staff who are fluent in ASL allows deaf customers to communicate their orders and preferences directly and comfortably without the need for interpreters or written notes. Hiring staff members who have a disability, such as hearing loss, can advance a company's inclusion efforts to the benefit of business growth and customer appeal. Consider that from 2018 to 2023, [the number of working-age people with disabilities](#) who were employed increased from 4.4 million to 6.3 million.



**Training programs:** Providing ASL training for existing staff helps ensure that more employees can assist deaf customers, fostering an inclusive environment.

**Visual menus:** Offering menus with pictures and descriptions can help deaf customers make their choices easily. Digital menus or tablets with visual and textual descriptions can be helpful.

**Written communication:** Customers should be able to engage via written communication.





# A GROWING NEED FOR VISUAL AIDS

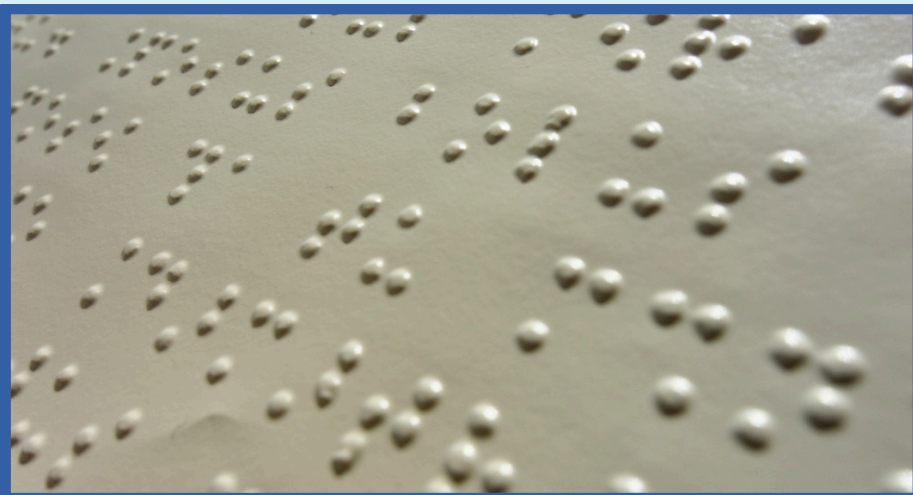
## A growing need for visual aids

Given that the youngest of the baby boomers will turn 65 by 2029, the [National Institutes of Health](#) projects the number of people with visual impairment or blindness in the United States to double, climbing to more than 8 million by 2050. Another 16.4 million Americans are expected to have difficulty seeing due to correctable refractive errors such as nearsightedness or farsightedness that can be addressed with glasses, contacts, or surgery.

## Make Braille menus available

[Braille](#) menus, those based on the system of raised dots that can be read by touch, can be indispensable for individuals who are blind or have low vision. Braille menus advance independence and inclusivity by providing individuals with access to the same information available to sighted people when dining out.

Without Braille menus, visually impaired diners may have to rely on others to read the menu to them, which affects their autonomy and overall dining experience. By offering Braille menus, restaurants and other establishments ensure that all customers can browse menu options and make their own decisions independent of others, fostering equal access to dining and helping to create a society in which more people may meaningfully participate.



**Braille is not a language. Braille operates as a code that can reproduce the sounds, phonetics, and semantics of almost any language.**

# A GROWING NEED FOR VISUAL AIDS

## How QR code menus can help

QR code menus at restaurants provide several benefits that can significantly help people with disabilities. Here are some ways in which they assist those with vision impairments:

- **Zoom and magnification:** Users can zoom in on digital menus to increase text size and improve readability, which is particularly useful for those with low vision. The 2022 [National Health Interview Survey](#) revealed that about 50 million adult Americans said they either "have trouble" seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses, or that they are blind or unable to see at all.

QR codes also assist those with mobility and dexterity impairments:

- **Ease of access:** QR code menus eliminate the need to handle physical menus, which can be cumbersome for individuals with limited hand dexterity. They can use their personal devices, which they might find easier to manipulate.
- **Hands-free operation:** Some mobile devices can be operated using voice commands, reducing the need for physical interaction with the device.

Individuals with hearing impairments may also benefit from QR codes:

- **Text communication:** Digital menus can provide a written format that is easier for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, they can quickly show the server their choices without needing verbal communication.



# THE PUSH FOR PROGRESS CONTINUES

Businesses that enact and advertise accessibility features create inclusive, welcoming spaces for all. And the growing awareness among businesses represents crucial progress toward bringing about a society in which those with diverse abilities are embraced and integrated into everyday life.

But we didn't arrive here by chance.

The fight for disability rights began long before the 1990 passage of the ADA, landmark legislation that works to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to employment, state and local government services, telecommunications, and public accommodations such as stores and restaurants.

Through activism, including rallies, marches, and public education, the movement demanded equal access and opportunity for those with disabilities. Seeds were sown with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibited discrimination in federally funded programs. In 1988, the National Council on Disability, a federal agency, drafted the initial ADA legislation. After two years of public hearings and revisions, President George H. W. Bush signed it into law in 1990. In 2008, the ADA Amendments Act broadened the definition of disability, making it easier for people with episodic conditions or perceived impairments to gain protection.

The ADA's impact is undeniable; its passage transformed the accessibility of public spaces, workplaces, and transportation.

What's good for society, in this instance, presents a compelling business case, as well.

An [Accenture report](#) found that companies that excel in disability inclusion drive more revenue, net income, and profit. It's easy to understand why, considering that people with disabilities in the United States command [nearly half a trillion dollars](#) in disposable income – not including their family, friends, and advocates – and increasingly participate in the workforce.