

# 6 Ways to Improve Accessibility for Customers



1 in 5 Americans has a disability

People with disabilities = **3rd largest** market segment in US

**Simple changes** can welcome new, loyal customers with different needs and abilities!

## #1 Communicate

- If you're not sure whether a customer needs help, just ask! **"May I help you?"**
- Speak directly to customers, even if you're not sure whether they will answer
- Talk with a normal voice. Slow down, and offer to repeat yourself if needed
- Understand when customers need time to think and respond
- Face toward customers when you speak so they can read your lips
- Choose clear, concrete, and concise language
- When posting directions, add graphics or photos with the text
- Communicate both visually and verbally (For example, say: "The total is \$10." And point to the \$10.00 on the cash register display)

## #2 Make Your Space Safe

### Ensure that your accessible parking is truly accessible:

- Area is clearly marked
- Includes space for a ramp to deploy
- Located near curb cuts
- Enforce violations by calling parking enforcement

### Make your entryway easier to navigate:

- Clearly mark ADA entrances so they are easy to find
- Heavy doors can be difficult to open
- Consider adding an automatic door opener and/or doorbell
- Choose door handles that can be used with a closed fist
- Offer a portable ramp solution for outdoor stairs

### Indoor space considerations:

- Declutter aisles and floors
- Mark difficult-to-see corners and steps with a stripe of colored tape or paint
- Make sure individuals in wheelchairs have space to make a 360° turn
- Remove rugs, or secure them to the floor
- Aim for doorways and walkways that are 36" wide

## #3 Offer Comfortable Restrooms

- Offer family restroom options
- Install large, sturdy diaper changing tables accessible to men and women
- Use gender- and age-neutral signage
- Offer alternatives to loud hands-free dryers
- Place paper or tape over automatic flush sensors so guests can control the timing of the flush
- Install lever handles (rather than round door knobs)

## #4 Reduce Overwhelming Sounds

- Minimize echo by:
  - Adding fabric (For example, fabric-covered cork boards or foam panels can act both as sound absorption panels and décor)
  - Move a tall bookcase to the middle of a large space to break up sound waves
- Take a "background sound inventory," and know which can be modified when they bother customers (refrigerator, lights, air conditioner, clock, lawn mowing, etc.)
- Adjust the volume of background music and TVs

Disabilities can be physical, developmental, visual, social, emotional, communicative, intellectual, and more.

Many customers' disabilities will not be obvious, but making changes like these will welcome a diverse group of customers and their families to your business!

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## #5 Offer Multiple Seating Options

- Know which tables and products are accessible for an individual using a wheelchair
- Offer larger or convertible high chairs for older children
- Get creative with benches, chairs, and stools
- Consider stability ball chairs, or other “wobble” options for customers who may have difficulty staying seated for long periods

## #6 Adjust Lighting

- Minimize the number of visual inputs that customers have to cope with simultaneously (lighting, signage, TV, etc.)
- Remove fluorescent lights
- Cover existing fluorescent lights with magnet shades, light filters, or reflective covers
- Offer to adjust lighting for customers
- Understand if customers wear sunglasses indoors

**Everyone wins when businesses welcome customers with disabilities!**

### For More Information:

#### Legal:

Americans with Disabilities Act <http://www.ada.gov/>  
ADA Wisconsin Partnership <http://www.adawipartnership.org/>  
Disability Rights Wisconsin <http://www.disabilityrightswi.org/>  
US Department of Justice <http://www.justice.gov/crt/disability-rights-section>  
Online Accessibility Standards under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 <http://www.section508.gov/>  
U.S. Tax Incentives of Investing in Accessibility <http://www.ada.gov/taxincent.pdf>

#### The Numbers:

**U.S. Census Bureau** <http://www.census.gov/>

- Over 1 in 5 Americans have a disability, comprising the largest minority group in the nation.
- 30% of the nation's 69.6 million families have at least one member with a disability.
- 50% of Americans 65 years and older have a disability.
- 61% of people with disabilities are of working age, between 16 and 64 years old.

**Kessler Foundation and National Organization on Disability** <https://kesslerfoundation.org/>

#### **The Buying Behavior of People with Disabilities:**

- 73% of people with disabilities are heads of households.
- 77% of people with disabilities have no children in the household (boosting discretionary income and free time for travel and leisure activities.)
- Individuals with disabilities exhibit strong brand loyalty toward products affiliated with disability-related causes.

#### Training & Education:

JJ's List Disability Awareness Players <http://www.jjlist.com/>  
Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support <http://www.wifacets.org/>

#### Resources:

Wisconsin Aging & Disability Resource Centers <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/index.htm>  
Disability.gov <https://www.disability.gov/>  
National Organization on Disability [http://nod.org/disability\\_resources/](http://nod.org/disability_resources/)  
Wisconsin Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/odhh/index.htm>  
Wisconsin Office for the Blind and Visually Impaired (OBVI) <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/blind/index.htm>