

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT GUIDELINES



Universal Access and ADA Accommodations—Exhibit Design

Exhibits are public accommodations under the Americans with disabilities Act (ADA), and each exhibitor is responsible for ensuring that show attendees who have disabilities have access to all of the demonstrations, information, contests, giveaways, or other services offered at a booth.

This brief guide suggests ways in which your booth can incorporate the goals of the universal design—making facilities accessible to all people—into its design.

GUIDELINES TO MAKE ALL BOOTHS MORE ACCESSIBLE

- Bring or rent chairs so that if you will be talking to someone who uses a wheelchair you can do so at the same eye level. A chair is also a help to people who may be ambulatory but who cannot stand for long periods to discuss your product with you.
- Mount monitors or televisions on a sturdy adjustable arm. If a video display is on a high table, be sure the mount allows you to tilt the display so people who are seated can have a clear view.
- If you are running informational videos, etc., keep the captions turned on so the deaf visitors (who may not “look” like they have a disability) can view them.
- If you are demonstrating a web site, have a lynx or other text based interface available so people can get an idea how navigable your site is using adaptive technology.
- Computer interfaces should be designed for use by any attendee. Solutions to allow universal computer access might include having different workstations at different heights; having a single workstation mounted on a height-adjustable table; or having a keyboard equipped with an extra long cable to allow a wheel chair user direct access.
- Design your walk through areas it have low, firm carpeting, 36” wide aisles, and a minimum clearance of 28” at any point. At exhibits, many wheelchair users use motorized three-wheelchairs; these require more clearance.
- All signage should be in contrasting colors, with at least 3” high.
- Ensure that if you have an inaccessible exhibit portion, all of the same demonstrations, services, etc. Are available at the ground level or in an accessible area.
- When handouts are not available in an accessible format to people who have low vision or are blind, describe all the information contained. Take the attendee’s business cards and offer to send them information in large print, on a disk in ASCII format, or via another accessible means.

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Daily Booth Checklist

- Floors are dry, carpet is flat, edges are flush and well secured.
- Electrical cords and computer cable are hidden and secured. Cords running under booth carpeting do not create a hazardous ridge.
- Floors are clear of trash and debris; any boxes stored under tables are pushed well to the back.
- Furniture is in its place with chairs pushed under tables.
- Chair seats are not being used for storage areas for purses or other personal belongings.
- Signage is clear and not blocked by displays.
- Displays, plants,, etc. do not block accessible routes or areas.
- Protruding objects do not extend into or block accessible routes.
- Banners, displays, etc. Hang no lower than 80" from the floor where people walk.
- Hazardous areas are clearly marked from all sides.
- Alternative interfaces, adaptive equipment, and accessible workstations are working.
- Magnifiers, paper, pens, and similar aids are readily available.
- A supply of already-rolled posters is available for people who may have difficulty rolling their own.
- A stapler is available to affix business cards to information requests, contest entry forms, and other forms for people who may find writing difficult.

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Universal Access and ADA Compliance—Service Access

The biggest problem with disabilities—and the easiest fix—concerns attitudes. Show attendees with disabilities report their greatest frustration comes when they are either ignored by booth staffers or when they are showered with extra, patronizing attention. Below are some tips to help your booth staffers take a “person first” attitude and interact positively with all clients.

- When talking about people, use “person first” terminology. For example, refer to “children with disabilities” not “disabled children.”
- Talk directly to the customer, not to an aide or interpreter. Remember, it is the customer who is interested in your products and services.
- Keep several pads and pens handy at places throughout the Booth so that you do not have to waste time hunting around if you need them for communication.
- Keep a simple hand or sheet magnifier on hand to help people with low vision follow when you are describing literature that is not in large print.
- Don’t be afraid to use common expressions. It is perfectly fine to say “let me show you our product” to someone who is blind.
- Honor a person’s private space. Do not move canes, crutches, walkers, or other mobility aide “out of the way.” Do not hold, push, or touch a person’s wheelchair unless asked. Don’t “help” a person by touching, guiding, or leading them unless asked.
- Similarly, if you will be “swiping” a customer’s badge, ask before reaching for it.
- If you are asked to guide someone who is blind, offer the person your elbow and let the person follow you. Announce any turns, steps, or other obstacles you are approaching. If someone joins or leaves the group, announce the fact so your customer knows who is involved in the conversation.
- Do not play with or pet guide dogs or working animals, no matter how attractive. They are “on duty” and it can put their owners in danger when they are distracted.
- Be professional. People with disabilities who are attending the exhibits are doing so because they are librarians, directors, trustees—in short, because they are interested in your products. Maintain a professional tone and discuss their professional needs.

When in doubt, ask! Your customer knows whether or not he or she can hear your demonstration, move through your booth, or read your handouts. Your customer is also best situated to tell you how to accommodate his or her need. Be flexible, courteous, and willing to try, and you will go a long way toward winning a new client.