

Access Is More Than Accommodations

50 things you can build in before anyone has to ask

Accommodations matter, but true accessibility starts earlier than that. Here are practical things classrooms, workshops, events, doctors' offices, workplaces, and shared spaces can build in by default.

1. Communication & Information

Clear information helps everyone participate.

- ☐ 1. Share location, schedule, and access information in advance.
- ☐ 2. Use plain language whenever possible.
- ☐ 3. Explain jargon, acronyms, and specialized terms.
- ☐ 4. Put important verbal information in writing too.
- ☐ 5. Offer captions, transcripts, or written summaries when possible.
- ☐ 6. Provide more than one way to communicate, like speaking, writing, chat, email, or AAC.
- ☐ 7. Use readable fonts, strong contrast, and uncluttered layouts.
- ☐ 8. Break large blocks of information into smaller chunks.
- ☐ 9. Offer examples, models, or visual supports.
- ☐ 10. Let people ask questions privately if they want to.

2. Sensory Access

Different brains. Different needs. Same welcome.

- ☐ 11. Keep lighting as comfortable and adjustable as possible.
- ☐ 12. Avoid flashing visuals and sudden loud sounds.
- ☐ 13. Allow headphones, earplugs, sunglasses, hats, and other sensory tools.
- ☐ 14. Offer a quieter space, corner, or break area.
- ☐ 15. Let people step out and come back without penalty.
- ☐ 16. Take fragrance concerns seriously.
- ☐ 17. Normalize stimming, fidgeting, and self-regulation tools.

3. Body Access

People move, rest, and exist in different ways. Plan for it.

- ☐ 18. Offer seating choices when possible.
- ☐ 19. Let people sit, stand, stretch, move, or pace.
- ☐ 20. Keep walkways and access routes clear.
- ☐ 21. Make restrooms easy to find and use.
- ☐ 22. Allow water, snacks, medications, and medical supplies.
- ☐ 23. Build in regular breaks.
- ☐ 24. Do not treat pain, fatigue, or rest needs as laziness.
- ☐ 25. Remember that body needs are part of participation, not distractions.

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More defaults that make spaces easier to use, easier to understand, and easier to belong in.

4. Executive Function & Process

Clearer processes. Less guesswork. More support to follow through.

- ☐ 26. Make forms and processes as simple as they can reasonably be.
- ☐ 27. Send reminders for deadlines, appointments, or required steps.
- ☐ 28. Put next steps in one obvious place.
- ☐ 29. Use clear subject lines, labels, and instructions.
- ☐ 30. Make it possible to recover if someone misses one step.
- ☐ 31. Offer materials in advance and afterward.
- ☐ 32. Build in processing time before expecting answers.
- ☐ 33. Make expectations explicit instead of implied.
- ☐ 34. Do not punish people for needing notes, reminders, or checklists.
- ☐ 35. Treat confusion as information, not disrespect.

5. Participation & Flexibility

Different ways to show up. Different ways to contribute. Same value.

- ☐ 36. Offer more than one way to participate.
- ☐ 37. Do not require speaking in front of a group every time.
- ☐ 38. Make group activities adaptable or optional when possible.
- ☐ 39. Let people participate without eye contact or camera use.
- ☐ 40. Make attendance and participation policies humane and flexible.
- ☐ 41. Value outcomes over performance style whenever possible.
- ☐ 42. Do not force icebreakers, touching, or personal disclosure.
- ☐ 43. Let people attend alone and still feel welcomed.
- ☐ 44. Remember that quiet people are still participating.
- ☐ 45. Let people choose tools that help them focus, regulate, or remember.

6. Accommodation Culture

Build a culture of care, inclusion, and continuous improvement.

- ☐ 46. State clearly how to request additional support.
- ☐ 47. Do not require public disclosure of diagnoses.
- ☐ 48. Do not make people repeatedly prove the same need.
- ☐ 49. Train staff not to interpret disability as laziness, rudeness, or lack of effort.
- ☐ 50. Regularly ask disabled people what would make the space easier to use.

Accessibility is not only about reacting well to requests. It is also about building spaces that assume human variation from the beginning.