

The “What Are We Assuming?” Audit

A printable access check for events, programs, classes, meetings, services, and community spaces. Use it before launch, not after someone has to ask for help.

How to use it

For each statement, check the box if your plan currently assumes it is true for everyone. Then write one change that would make participation possible without that assumption.

Getting There & Getting In

Assumption	Barrier-removing change
Everyone drives or has access to a car.	
Everyone can afford parking, gas, fares, or rideshare.	
Everyone can use stairs.	
Everyone can walk a long distance from parking or transit.	
Everyone can arrive exactly on time.	
Everyone can come during standard business hours.	
Everyone knows how to find the building or room without extra directions.	

Physical Space & Body Access

Assumption	Barrier-removing change
Everyone can stand for an hour.	
Everyone can sit in the same kind of chair.	
Everyone can comfortably use narrow aisles or crowded rooms.	
Everyone can use standard-height tables or counters.	
Everyone can tolerate waiting in line.	

Assumption	Barrier-removing change
Everyone can access and use the available bathrooms.	
Everyone can carry their own materials, bags, or equipment.	

Communication & Information

Assumption	Barrier-removing change
Everyone can read small print.	
Everyone can process dense blocks of text quickly.	
Everyone can hear spoken instructions clearly.	
Everyone can understand information the first time it is said.	
Everyone can make phone calls.	
Everyone can answer questions out loud in front of others.	
Everyone is comfortable asking staff for clarification.	
Everyone uses the same language or communication style.	

Technology & Digital Access

Assumption	Barrier-removing change
Everyone has reliable internet.	
Everyone owns a smartphone, laptop, or tablet.	
Everyone has enough data or storage to download materials.	
Everyone can scan QR codes.	
Everyone can navigate unfamiliar apps or websites.	
Everyone can use video calls with camera or microphone on.	
Everyone can complete forms online without assistance.	

Money, Time & Resources

Assumption	Barrier-removing change
Everyone has disposable income.	
Everyone can pay upfront and wait for reimbursement.	
Everyone can afford required supplies, food, uniforms, or equipment.	
Everyone has free time outside work, school, or caregiving.	
Everyone can commit to the same schedule every week.	
Everyone has a quiet place to prepare or participate.	
Everyone can print materials at home.	

Attention, Sensory & Energy

Assumption	Barrier-removing change
Everyone can focus for long periods without breaks.	
Everyone can sit still to show attention.	
Everyone can tolerate bright lights.	
Everyone can tolerate background noise, music, or overlapping conversation.	
Everyone can tolerate fragrance, food smells, or cleaning products.	
Everyone can participate without recovering afterward.	
Everyone has the same amount of energy from one day to the next.	

Social Safety & Participation

Assumption	Barrier-removing change
Everyone is comfortable entering a room where they know no one.	
Everyone understands unwritten social rules.	
Everyone can introduce themselves on demand.	
Everyone is comfortable being photographed or recorded.	
Everyone can disclose a disability or access need safely.	
Everyone can participate in group work.	
Everyone feels safe with police, security, authority figures, or institutional staff.	
Everyone is comfortable with touch, handshakes, or physical proximity.	

What did we learn?

Use this page to turn the audit into actual design decisions.

The assumptions that showed up most often:

The barriers most likely to prevent someone from participating:

Three changes we can make immediately:

Changes that need money, approval, or more planning:

Who should we ask before making decisions for them?

What will we stop requiring by default?

Before we call this accessible:

We checked assumptions before advertising.
Access information is public and easy to find.
People can request changes without proving they deserve them.
There is more than one way to participate.
Cost, transportation, communication, sensory, and energy barriers were considered.
We know who will respond when an access problem happens.