

The 'Is This Actually Accessible?' Scorecard

A worksheet for evaluating classrooms, workshops, events, doctors' offices, or workplaces

Accessibility is more than being technically allowed inside a space.

A space can have a ramp and still be inaccessible. It can offer accommodations 'upon request' and still make people fight for every one. Use this scorecard to look at what a space actually asks of the people inside it.

Space or event: _____

Date: _____

What kind of space is this?

- ☐ Classroom
- ☐ Workshop or training
- ☐ Event
- ☐ Doctor's office / healthcare setting
- ☐ Workplace
- ☐ Community space
- ☐ Online space
- ☐ Other: _____

How to Score

2 = Yes, consistently

1 = Sometimes / somewhat / only if requested

0 = No / not available / creates a barrier

N/A = Not relevant here

Try to score the space based on what is actually available, not what theoretically could be arranged.

1. Getting In the Door

	0	1	2	N/A
The physical entrance is accessible to people with mobility disabilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accessible parking, drop-off, or transportation information is available.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can find the location without confusing or incomplete directions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Important accessibility information is available before someone arrives.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Registration or check-in does not require unnecessarily complicated paperwork or technology.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can ask accessibility questions before attending without being treated like a problem.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

Immediate barriers I noticed:

2. The Sensory Environment

	0	1	2	N/A
Lighting is tolerable or adjustable.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is an option to avoid fluorescent, flashing, or extremely bright lighting.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Noise levels are manageable.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can use headphones, earplugs, sunglasses, hats, or other sensory tools.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strong fragrances are limited or fragrance concerns are taken seriously.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is somewhere quieter to go when someone becomes overwhelmed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can step outside and return without being punished, embarrassed, or excluded.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

Sensory stressors:

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3. Body Access

	0	1	2	N/A
People are allowed to stand, sit, move, stretch, or change positions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seating options accommodate different bodies and physical needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can use mobility aids without obstruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restrooms are physically accessible.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can access water, food, medication, or medical supplies when needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Breaks are available often enough for people with pain, fatigue, chronic illness, pregnancy, medication needs, or other body needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Someone who needs to rest is not automatically treated as disengaged or disrespectful.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

Body access barriers I noticed:

4. Communication Access

	0	1	2	N/A
Important information is available in writing.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Verbal instructions are also provided visually or in written form when possible.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can ask for repetition or clarification without shame.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Jargon, acronyms, or specialized language are explained.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Captions, transcripts, interpreters, or other communication supports are available when needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People have more than one way to communicate: speaking, writing, typing, AAC, chat, email, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Someone is not required to make eye contact to be considered attentive or respectful.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

Communication access barriers I noticed:

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5. Processing & Learning Access

	0	1	2	N/A
Instructions are broken into manageable steps.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Expectations are explicit rather than implied.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agendas, schedules, or plans are available in advance.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People have enough time to process questions before answering.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Materials are available to review afterward.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People are not expected to remember large amounts of spoken information without support.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multiple ways of learning or participating are available.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mistakes, confusion, or needing something explained differently are treated as normal.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

Things that help me learn and process:

6. Executive Function Access

	0	1	2	N/A
Deadlines, appointment times, locations, and expectations are easy to find.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reminders are provided for important tasks or appointments.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Forms and processes are as simple as they reasonably can be.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are clear next steps after meetings, appointments, lessons, or events.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People are not punished for needing written reminders or organizational supports.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Missing one instruction does not make the entire process impossible to recover.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff will help someone figure out what to do next instead of simply saying, "You should already know."	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

Executive function supports I noticed:

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7. Social Access

	0	1	2	N/A
Participation does not always require speaking in front of a group.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can choose whether or not to participate in icebreakers or highly social activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quiet people are not treated as uninterested.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People who communicate differently are given time and space to do so.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social rules and expectations are reasonably explicit.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can attend alone without already knowing someone.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group activities allow alternatives when participation would create a disability-related barrier.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

Notes, examples, or barriers I noticed:

8. Emotional & Psychological Safety

	0	1	2	N/A
People can say they are overwhelmed, confused, tired, or uncomfortable without being mocked.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff respond calmly when someone becomes distressed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People are not forced to disclose diagnoses to have basic needs respected.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Boundaries are respected.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can decline touching, hugging, physical activities, or personal disclosure.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conflict or mistakes are addressed without humiliation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is a clear way to report a problem or ask for help.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

Notes, examples, or barriers I noticed:

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9. Accommodations Without the Obstacle Course

	0	1	2	N/A
People are told how to request accommodations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The accommodation process is straightforward.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People are not required to repeatedly prove the same disability.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff know who is responsible for accessibility requests.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Common accommodations are already built into the environment whenever possible.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asking for an accommodation does not dramatically increase someone's workload.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People are not treated as inconvenient, demanding, or suspicious for asking for access.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

10. Flexibility & Autonomy

	0	1	2	N/A
There is more than one acceptable way to participate.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can take breaks without having to justify themselves publicly.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People can use tools that help them regulate, focus, communicate, or remember.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attendance or participation policies allow reasonable flexibility.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Whenever possible, outcomes matter more than performing a specific 'correct' process.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People have meaningful choices about their own bodies and participation.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section score: _____ / _____

The Accessibility Reality Check

Because real accessibility is about people, not just checkboxes.

1. The Accessibility Reality Check

Some barriers matter more than a numerical score. Check any that apply:

- ☐ Someone has to disclose a diagnosis to have a basic need taken seriously.
- ☐ Accommodations technically exist, but the process is so difficult that many people cannot access them.
- ☐ A person could be punished for leaving when overwhelmed.
- ☐ Disability-related behavior is regularly interpreted as laziness, disrespect, defiance, lack of interest, or lack of professionalism.
- ☐ People are expected to endure pain, sensory overload, fatigue, hunger, bathroom needs, or distress in order to participate.
- ☐ Staff decide whether someone 'looks disabled enough.'
- ☐ Accessibility depends entirely on whether one particular staff member is willing to help.
- ☐ People are expected to advocate for themselves while already overwhelmed.
- ☐ The environment assumes that everybody can sit still, speak quickly, read quickly, hear clearly, see clearly, remember instructions, tolerate noise, regulate emotions privately, and work at the same pace.
- ☐ People could theoretically participate here, but doing so would cost them far more energy than it costs everyone else.

If you checked several of these boxes, the space may have serious accessibility problems regardless of its numerical score.

2. Your Score

Points earned: _____

Points possible: _____

Points earned ÷ points possible × 100 = _____ %

90–100% — Access is built in

75–89% — Pretty accessible, with gaps

50–74% — Access depends on the person

25–49% — Major barriers

0–24% — Technically present, functionally inaccessible

A high score does not erase a serious safety or access barrier.

3. The Three-Barrier Test

The three biggest barriers in this space are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Which one could be changed immediately? _____

Which one requires a policy, budget, or structural change?

Who has the power to change it? _____

What would make the biggest difference for the people currently doing the most work to participate?

4. Questions Worth Asking

Who does this environment work beautifully for? _____

Who has to work harder to use it? _____

What needs are currently treated as exceptions? _____

What accommodations could simply become normal options for everyone? _____

What would change if we designed this space around human variation instead of an imaginary 'average' person?

5. One Small Accessibility Upgrade

I can make this space more accessible by:

Who will do it? _____ By when? _____

Accessibility is not a special feature added for a few people. It is what happens when we stop designing environments that require everyone to have the same body, brain, energy level, communication style, sensory profile, and capacity every day.