



*Kyra, by Thomas Allen*



# Access Tips

A Publication of VSA Missouri  
The State Organization on Arts & Disability



**vsa**  
**MISSOURI**

The State Organization  
on Arts and Disability

PO Box 58624  
St. Louis, Missouri 63158  
888-718-0866 (toll free)

[www.vsamissouri.org](http://www.vsamissouri.org)  
[vsamissouri@gmail.com](mailto:vsamissouri@gmail.com)



## Resources:

**VSA Missouri** offers workshops and technical assistance on access for organizations, artists and community groups. Call or email: 816-868-1789, [vsamissouri@gmail.com](mailto:vsamissouri@gmail.com)

The **State of Missouri Disability Portal** and **Governor's Council on Disability** offer a wealth of information on disability related resources throughout the state. Visit: <http://www.disabilityinfo.mo.gov/>

The **Leadership Exchange in Arts & Disability** offers an annual conference and serves as a think tank on access and the arts where best practices are shared. [www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/education/lead/home.html](http://www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/education/lead/home.html)

Information on **access for people who are blind or have low vision**: <http://www.lighthouse.org/accessibility>

**Technical assistance, training, and materials on all aspects of The Americans with Disabilities Act** and related disability laws for individuals and entities of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. <http://www.adaproject.org/>

**Relay Missouri** connects deaf, hard of hearing, senior citizens, and speech disabled telephone users with people and businesses that use regular voice telephones. The number for TTY users is (800)735-2499. For agencies that do not have a TTY and need to call a TTY user: (800)735-2466.

**Access to relay services nationwide:** dial 711



### The Information Symbol

The most valuable commodity of today's society is information; to a person with a disability it is essential. For example, the symbol may be used on signage or on a floor plan to indicate the location of the information or security desk, where there is more specific information or materials concerning access accommodations and services such as "LARGE PRINT" materials, audio cassette recordings of materials, or sign interpreted tours.



### Closed Captioning (CC)

This symbol indicates a choice for whether or not to display captions for a television program or videotape. TV sets that have a built-in or a separate decoder are equipped to display dialogue for programs that are captioned when selected by the viewer. The Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 requires TV sets (with screens 13" or larger) to have built-in decoders as of July, 1993. Also, videos that are part of exhibitions may be closed captioned using the symbol with instruction to press a button for captioning.



### Opened Captioning (OC)

This symbol indicates that captions, which translate dialogue and other sounds in print, are always displayed on the videotape, movie or television program. Open Captioning is preferred by many including deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, and people whose second language is English. In addition, it is helpful in teaching children how to read and in keeping sound levels to a minimum in museums and restaurants.



### Braille Symbol

This symbol indicates that printed material is available in Braille, including exhibition labeling, publications and signage.



### Audio Description

A service for persons who are blind or have low vision Audio Description makes the performing arts, visual arts, television, video, and film more accessible. Description of visual elements is provided by a trained Audio Descriptor through the Secondary Audio Program (SAP) of televisions and monitors equipped with stereo sound. An adapter for non-stereo TVs is available through the American Foundation for the Blind, (800) 829-0500. For live Audio Description, a trained Audio Descriptor offers live commentary or narration (via headphones and a small transmitter) consisting of concise, objective descriptions of visual elements: i.e., a theater performance or a visual arts exhibition.



### Ramps

Ramps are essential for wheelchair users if elevators or lifts are not available to connect different levels. However, some people who use walking aids have difficulty with ramps and prefer stairs. Although ramp slopes between 1:16 and 1:20 are preferred the rule of thumb for constructing a ramp is 12" of length for every inch of rise. The ability to manage an incline is related to both its slope and its length. Wheelchair users with disabilities affecting their arms or with low stamina have serious difficulty using inclines. In fact many ambulatory people and most people who use wheelchairs can manage a slope of even 1:16.

Downloadable versions of these symbols for print or web are available at:  
<http://www.graphicartistsguild.org/resources/disability-access-symbols/>

## Access Symbols



### Access for Individuals Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

This symbol may be used to indicate access for people who are blind or have low vision, including: a guided tour, a path to a nature trail or a scent garden in a park; and a tactile tour or a museum exhibition that may be touched. (For other than Print or Braille)



### Symbol for Accessibility

The wheelchair symbol should only be used to indicate access for individuals with limited mobility including wheelchair users. For example, the symbol is used to indicate an accessible entrance, bathroom or that a phone is lowered for wheelchair users. Remember that a ramped entrance is not completely accessible if there are no curb cuts, and an elevator is not accessible if it can only be reached via steps.



### Telephone Typewriter (TTY)

This device is also known as a text telephone (TT), or telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD). TTY indicates a device used with the telephone for communication with and between deaf, hard of hearing, speech impaired and/or hearing persons.



### Volume Control Telephone

This symbol indicates the location of telephones that have handsets with amplified sound and/or adjustable volume controls.



### Assistive Listening Systems

These systems transmit amplified sound via hearing aids, headsets or other devices. They include infrared, loop and FM systems. Portable systems may be available from the same audiovisual equipment suppliers that service conferences and meetings.



### Accessible Print (18 pt. or Larger)

The symbol for large print is "Large Print" printed in 18 pt. or larger text. In addition to indicating that large print versions of books, pamphlets, museum guides and theater programs are available, you may use the symbol on conference or membership forms to indicate that print materials may be provided in large print. Sans serif or modified serif print with good contrast is important, and special attention should be paid to letter and word spacing.



### Sign Language Interpretation (ASL)

The symbol indicates that Sign Language Interpretation is provided for a lecture, tour, film, performance, conference or other program.

**VSA Missouri, The State Organization on Arts and Disability**, is an affiliate of VSA, The International Organization on Arts and Disability. For information on VSA Missouri visit [www.vsamissouri.org](http://www.vsamissouri.org) and for the international VSA network visit: [www.vsarts.org](http://www.vsarts.org).

VSA, The International Organization on Arts and Disability, and the Missouri Arts Council (MAC) made this publication possible.



VSA Missouri is also grateful to the LEAD (Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability) network facilitated by the Access Office of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts from which much of the material in this booklet was taken.

**This booklet is designed as a basic introduction** to ensuring that audience members, participants and presenting artists with disabilities have access to the same opportunities in the arts as those without disabilities. For additional resource material or to find out how VSA Missouri can help you, your organization or your school to make what you offer more accessible contact us. Also take advantage of the other sources of information listed on the opposite page and throughout this publication.

Please reproduce and distribute this booklet widely!



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## Quick facts and context for this booklet:

**Today, there are over 54 million Americans with disabilities,** 20 percent of the U.S. population. At 20 percent of the population, people with disabilities comprise the nation's largest minority group. As the general population ages, approximately 40 percent of those over 65 will likely have disabilities. Serving customers with disabilities provides significant opportunities for the business community. More than 20.3 million families in the U.S. have at least one member with a disability. Persons with disabilities themselves have a combined income of nearly \$700 billion. Of that figure, \$175 billion is discretionary income.

**According to the US Census more than 17% of Missouri citizens** have a disability.

**There is no single, universally accepted definition of disability.** Researchers have identified over 20 definitions of disability used for purposes of entitlement to public or private income support programs, government services, or statistical analysis.

**Attitudinal barriers** – the assumption that people with disabilities are essentially different and can be lumped into one population demographic considered ‘less capable’, ‘special’, ‘brave’ or ‘gifted’ – these are the most prevalent barriers people with disabilities face. They are also the barriers most necessary and difficult to address if we are ever to have a truly inclusive society.

**Use “People-First” language.** It is important not to use a disability as an adjective such as the Downs boy. Rather, he is the boy with Down Syndrome. This also applies to children without disabilities such as the girl who is Asian rather than the Asian girl. We no longer use the expression that someone is “wheelchair bound” but rather that the person uses a wheelchair, or is a wheelchair user.

**The suggestions in this publication do not ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** but will help you welcome and encourage involvement by patrons, audience members and artists with disabilities.

- iii) adjust closer on door to lessen pressure for easier open/close
- iv) bevel threshold (make it a 'rampette')
- v) change door handles from knobs to levers
- vi) use swing-away hinges
- vii) attach rope pull around door knobs
- b) Provide more than one way to get paper products from rest rooms. Use pump style soap dispensers.
- c) Add full length mirror
- d) Provide paper cups at water fountains.
- e) Provide straws with drinks.
- f) Add grab bars (make sure of correct placement).
- g) Install risers for toilets that are too low.
- h) Make sure paths are clear and 36 inches wide; do regular "barrier checks" to ensure paths remain clear
- i) Remove or secure rugs
- j) Create non-skid surfaces – clear coating that is non-slip can be obtained from [noskidding.com](http://noskidding.com)
- k) Compensate for too-high counter areas by using tables
- l) Have clipboard available for transactions at a counter that is too high
- m) In elevator where buttons too high, have a wand available (Velcro attach)
- n) Increase lighting in dark areas - change wattage in bulbs
- o) Lighting – even (non-glaring)
- p) Use natural spectrum or non-hum light bulbs
- q) Place light colored tape on edge of steps or places where level changes
- r) Use colored tape and/or different colored paints to delineate spaces and help with wayfinding
- s) Ensure an access path through gift shop
- t) Use paint with low-glare finish
- u) Install light switches in colors that contrast with walls
- v) Use fabric & furniture to deaden echo

## Refreshments

Place refreshments on surfaces between 28" and 34" high.

Consider dietary restrictions. Common issues include allergy to nuts, lactose intolerance, or a need to avoid sugar or wheat flour. Have alternatives available if possible.

## Signage

- a) should be Directional, Functional, Plentiful, Clear
- b) place one that clearly states "For Assistance...."
- c) add signage clarifying accessible rooms and routes
- d) color and shape code information

## Other

Be aware of chemical/environmental sensitivity – some people are highly allergic to cigarette smoke, perfumed products, mildew or cleaning solvents.

Scent tips

- a) avoid using scented products
- b) use natural cleaning agents (baking soda, vinegar, lavender oil, etc.; ask patron what works)

Provide rest areas

- a) for service animals as well as water bowls
- b) benches/chairs

## Barrier Removal Ideas

- a) Doors/Doorways
  - i) remove where possible
  - ii) add doorbell at a difficult doorway

**When the word "access" is used many of us think of ramps, wheelchair users, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).** Just a quick look at ADA guidelines, however, makes it clear that accessible environments involve more than ramps. For example: The nice gradual slopes that make moving across an intersection ideal for someone on wheels give a person using a cane no sense where the sidewalk ends and the street begins. Most curb cuts face diagonally into traffic. Without other cues a cane user might find him or her self right in the middle of a busy intersection.

**The ADA Readily Removable Barrier Checklist** is a useful tool to help you identify access considerations. It is available at: <http://www.ada.gov/checkweb.htm>.

**Consulting directly with people with disabilities** helps to ensure user-friendly access. Find the Independent Living Center in your community for assistance: [www.mosilc.org/CIL.htm](http://www.mosilc.org/CIL.htm)

**In addition to the legal requirements of the ADA,** there are two other concepts useful to be familiar with:

**Visitability** (see [www.concretechange.org](http://www.concretechange.org)) consists of three elements: One ZERO-STEP entrance, all main floor interior doors-- including restrooms-- with 32 inches of clear passage space, and a restroom on the main floor. In other words, ability to *get in and out and use the bathroom*--the essentials for visiting.

**Universal Design** is based on the concept that all products and environments can and should be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation or specialized design. The Center for Universal Design in Raleigh, North Carolina is the hotbed for development of this concept. Universal Design is the ideal – for all people to access the same things, at the same time, and in the same way. No separate facilities, no segregated entry through the back door.

## Key To Quality Customer Service

The key to providing quality services for customers with disabilities is to remember that all customers are individuals. Persons with disabilities come in all shapes and sizes with diverse personalities, abilities, interests, needs, and preferences --- just like every other customer. In most cases, the best way to learn how to accommodate customers with disabilities is to ask them directly.

Etiquette considered appropriate when interacting with customers with disabilities is based primarily on respect and courtesy. Listen and learn from what the customer tells you regarding his or her needs. Remember, customers with disabilities will continue to patronize businesses that welcome them, are helpful, are accessible and provide quality products and/or services at competitive market prices.

## General Tips for Communicating

When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)

If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.

Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

Information on this page taken (and more is available) from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy  
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ek98/provide.htm>



## Hands-On Activities and Arts Education

- √ Purchase scented crayons for activities with patrons with disabilities (though keep in mind scent concerns mentioned earlier)
- √ Use Model Magic (Crayola product) to make customized adaptive grips
- √ Sponges can be taped on to handles for easier grip (a variety of rubber or sponge tubing is available at hardware stores as well)
- √ Spatulas make good mouth grips
- √ Extend handles with towel rods (or anything long) and duct tape
- √ Tape paint containers to work surface to secure and avoid spills
- √ Place wood blocks or bricks under tables that are too short
- √ Velcro and elastic strapping can be used to attach, hang, and secure lightweight tools
- √ Use painters tape to secure paper to work surfaces
- √ 15 inch square masonite surfaces are handy to prop for angled work areas or for use as lapboards
- √ Simple edge stops for table easels or propped surfaces can be mounted on tables using C-clamps and a length of molding
- √ Paper towels are invaluable!





## Visual Arts Events:

- √ Ideal viewing 'mid-line' for both chair users and standing viewers is 54". "Comfortable" viewing zone for both standing and seated viewers is between 48" and 67" above the floor.
- √ Make sure labels are printed in at least a 24 pt. sans serif font.
- √ Mount labels within the comfortable viewing zone noted above.
- √ Braille can be provided on clear plastic adhesive backed sheets to affix to printed labels or above text.
- √ Note that the ideal mounting height for Braille signage is with a mid-line at 60" above the floor.
- √ For visitors who are blind, audio description is ideal. In the absence of that be prepared to offer a verbal description of the work on view.
- √ Be sure there is a ramped or flat path of entry from the parking area to the exhibit, with thresholds no more than ¼" high.
- √ Entry door should provide at least 32" clearance.
- √ All public 'paths' in the exhibit space should be a minimum of 36" wide, the ideal is 5' to allow for wheelchair users and walking people to pass each other.
- √ Provide all materials in **alternate formats**
  - a) large print and Braille programs
  - b) audio tape & tape player
  - c) on CD in both text and pdf files

## Increasing Access Can Be Relatively Easy and Inexpensive:

**Print and Web Materials** (programs, playbills, brochures, business cards, posters, flyers, etc)

- 1) Provide Large Print versions (type set or copied) 16 - 18 pt font
- 2) Provide both pdf and text only versions of all materials on CD (and offer to email)
- 3) Use Fonts that are sans serif: Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, etc.
  - a) avoid italics
  - b) avoid condensed spacing
  - c) avoid text over graphic
  - d) justify left
- 4) Color and Paper Choices
  - a) avoid glossy or highly reflective papers when printing
  - b) avoid using colors that are similar in lightness (yellow on orange; yellow on white; white on gray)
  - c) avoid using red and green together (many people have red/green color blindness)
  - d) do use colors with effective contrasts (black against a light color; magenta against pale green)
- 5) Graphics
  - a) never place essential information in a graphic image
  - b) avoid photo backgrounds

**Use Access Symbols** on signage and in advertisements, brochures, calendar listings and event information on web sites (see examples and link to download towards the end of this booklet)

**Welcome** telephone, email and in-person inquiries about accessibility

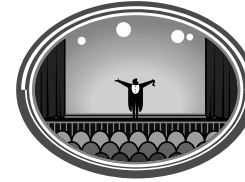
**Don't worry** about saying you don't know, but be willing to find out!

**Note:** Some of this information is taken directly from "Access for Under 100.00," a list compiled by participants at Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD) conferences, with special thanks to The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Access Office.

## Audience Development:

- Train staff and volunteers** (Leadership, Management, Design, Marketing, Box Office, Front of House/Ushers)
- a) staff should always introduce themselves (badges hard to read)
  - b) remind staff not to turn their backs on people who may have hearing loss
  - c) make sure staff know accessible (as well as shortest) routes in your facility
  - d) emphasize great customer service
  - e) train on accommodations provided and how to use (elevators; Assistive Listening Devices (ALD's), etc.)
  - f) make sure everyone knows how to use relay services (TTY) - don't forget nationwide (711) as well as local relay
  - g) docents should know how to modify tour language for clarity
  - h) train staff on potential difficulties in your space
  - i) travel routes yourself (borrow a wheelchair to test if possible)
  - j) shop your own box office and website for familiarity

- Expand Your Audience** by: connecting with community arts and service organizations, libraries, Better Business Bureau, community and senior centers, assisted living centers, self-help, programs, audio clinics, independent living centers, radio reading services, colleges/universities with Special Education programs, college/university student disability resource offices.
- a) request assistance with information dissemination
  - b) target audiences for specific programming (AD, OC, ASL performances—see last two pages for definitions)
  - c) join disability list serves
  - d) visit disability organizations and educate their communities about services you provide
  - e) invite people with disabilities to join an advisory board or serve as ambassadors for your programs
  - f) host an open house for disability organization members
  - g) invite service animal training schools to do training at your facility



## Performing Arts Events:

- √ Curtain pitches before performances can include information about your services
- √ Offer Touch Tours and/or multi-sensory tours and advertise in ads
- √ Provide printed scripts in advance
- √ Use flag or visual cue to announce start of show. Dim lights gently, not rapidly
- √ Provide synopsis of play
- √ Provide visual information on characters
- √ Provide personnel able to assist patrons outside of the box office
- √ Provide all materials in alternate formats
  - a) large print and Braille programs
  - b) audio tape & tape player
  - c) on CD in both text and pdf files
- √ Be sure there is a ramped or flat path of entry from the parking area to the seating area, with thresholds no more than ¼" high
- √ Entry door should provide at least 32" clearance
- √ All public 'paths' in the space should be a minimum of 36" wide, the ideal is 5' to allow for wheelchair users and walkers to pass each other
- √ Provide personnel able to assist patrons outside of the box office