

For more information...

For more information on specific accessibility problems or adaptive techniques or aids, here are some resources for you to contact:

www.easterseals.com/easyaccess

**Architectural and Transportation
Barriers Compliance Board**

1111 18th Street, N.W., Suite 501
Washington, D.C. 20036-3894
800/USA-ABLE (Voice/TDD)
www.access-board.gov

**Center for Accessible Housing
School of Design**

North Carolina State University, Box 8613
Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-8613
919/737-3082 (Voice/TDD)
www.design.ncsu.edu.cud

Paralyzed Veterans of America

801 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
202/416-7710
www.pva.org

**American Institute
of Architects**

1735 New York Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292
www.aia.org

*Designing, building and remodeling with
"barrier free" living in mind is desirable and logical.
Wider doors and hallways, ground level entrances
and an accessible ground level bathroom are all
elements that create a warm, inviting, aesthetic
home that can be enjoyed by everyone.
As America "comes of age," barrier-free housing
is a first step toward easy living for one and all.*



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Easy Access Housing

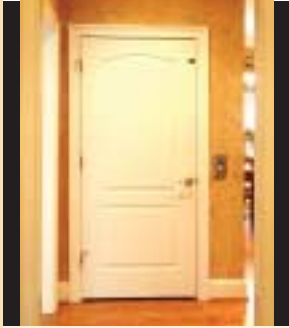


For Easier Living



Developed by Easter Seals
Brought to you by the CENTURY 21® System





There are more than 54 million Americans with disabilities. Many are children who live with their families, attend school and enjoy their friends. More than half are adults, many of whom work and live on their own or with their families. Among this group are a growing number of older Americans who are living longer and developing vision, hearing and some physical disabilities as they age. This group of older Americans has voiced their concern about finding homes they can grow old in as an alternative to nursing homes and retirement communities.

Attractive, accessible housing is essential for children and adults with disabilities as they go about their everyday lives. This may mean finding a home that is accessible or can be adapted for someone who has a physical disability and uses a wheelchair or crutches to get around. It may involve adapting a home for someone who has a hearing or vision disability. Or it could mean building a new, accessible home for non-disabled and disabled persons to enjoy throughout their lives.

Easter Seals and the Century 21 System have developed this simple checklist as a guide for what to look for in an accessible home, and to help point out what features are necessary for homes to be adapted to accommodate persons with many different kinds of disabilities.



DEFINING ADAPTABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

An adaptable house has certain structural features that make it possible to modify it to accommodate people with a wide range of physical abilities. The adaptable house is a lifetime living house. It's similar to insurance for people in that if they, or someone close to them, become disabled or experience a change in their physical abilities, they can modify the house to accommodate their needs. An accessible house or dwelling is equipped with specific features to accommodate people with permanent disabilities or declining physical abilities.

HOME ADAPTABILITY CHECKLIST

A home is considered adaptable if it has all or most of the following key structural features which allow reasonable entry and circulation without extensive modification.

- Located on a relatively flat or level site with paved walkways from parking (covered is preferred) and sidewalk areas to level entry
- A ground-level entrance or a one or two step entrance clear of any major obstructions, i.e. trees, building corners, etc., that would accept a ramp with a slope no greater than 1" height per 12" in length
- No steps or abrupt level changes on main floor
- Wider-than-standard doorways (32" or more clear width); 1/2" high maximum thresholds
- Wide hallways at least 42"; preferably 48"-60"
- At least one large bathroom with a 32" clear door opening and clear 5' x 5' floor space
- A kitchen large enough for easy wheelchair mobility (U or L shaped or open plan preferred)



NOTE: The 1988 Fair Housing Amendments Act protects persons with disabilities from unfair and discriminatory housing practices. It also provides for certain architectural accessibility and adaptable design requirements in new multi-family housing built for first occupancy on or after March 13, 1991. Builders and developers of multi-family housing should be familiar with these design requirements.

There are no federal building access requirements for single residential settings. While in keeping with general federal and state housing accessibility standards, these checklists are not intended to be used to determine if builders, developers, etc. have met the necessary building codes governing single home construction. Building codes for single-family residential structures vary from state to state and should be checked prior to any construction.

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST

When you preview a house for accessibility, especially wheelchair accessibility, check each item that is presently available. Individual access needs vary greatly. Wheelchairs are used for different reasons and come in many different sizes so, while one person using a wheelchair may be able to get through a 32 inch doorway, another may need 36 inches. Where a range of measurement is indicated on the accessibility checklist, note the exact width or height in the space provided.

This list will provide the user with a measure of existing accessibility features. Certainly all of these features are not necessary, or even desirable, to meet the needs of an individual with a disability. This checklist is intended to generate enough information about any given home to let people interested in accessibility features know if it warrants consideration. At the end of the checklist, you will find some general tips and resources.

GENERAL

- One-story building
- Multi-level house with main level accessible entrance, bathroom and bedroom
- Level entry way or ramp with entry level landing for easy door opening
- Wide doorways (32"-36" clear width)
- Wide hallways (42"-60")
- Low-pile carpeting with thin padding or smooth surfaces
- Chair-height (48"-54")* doorbell/mailbox
- Chair-height electrical controls/outlets (excluding the kitchen, generally controls are 6" lower and outlets are 6" higher than standard)
- Chair-height push-button telephones/jacks
- Accessible, easily operated window controls, i.e. slide to side can be opened with one hand or less than eight pounds of pressure, located 24"-28" from floor
- Direct outside emergency exit from bedroom
- Audio and visual smoke detectors
- Large windows, overhead lighting or several electrical outlets in each room (Lighting is a big consideration for persons with low vision)



***Note:** Chair-height is defined as how far a person using a wheelchair can reach. Using a front approach, chair-height for a person using a wheelchair is approximately 48 inches. Using a parallel approach, chair-height is about 54 inches.

KITCHEN

- Front control-operated range
- Countertop range
- Lowered wall oven (30"-42")
- Side by side, frost-free, dispenser type refrigerator
- Varying countertop and cabinet heights
- Counters with pullout cutting boards
- Front control-operated, built-in dishwasher
- Front loading washer/dryer



BATHROOM

- Out swing doors
- Non-slip floors
- Grab bars
- Reinforced walls (i.e. 3/4" plywood backing throughout) for installation of grab bars
- 5' square clear area (required for most wheelchair users to make a 360 degree turn). Since many wheelchair users can function in smaller areas, measure exact clear floor space if less than 5'
- Chair-height racks/shelves/cabinets
- Lever handled faucets
- Lowered or tilted mirror
- Roll-under vanity top
- Hinged, fold-down seat in shower
- Roll-in shower with no curb
- Hand-held or adjustable shower head
- Bathtub with nonskid strips or surface
- Toilet seat 17"-19" from floor; or wall mounted toilet
- Telephone outlet



BEDROOM

- Open floor plan
- Built-in cabinets have 6" baseboard recess
- Built-in wall bed
- Direct access to accessible bathroom
- Reinforced ceiling (to accommodate pulleys for lifting mechanisms)

CLOSETS

- Sliding doors or bi-folding doors
- Adjustable shelves and hanging rods
- Shallow shelves no more than 18" deep

GARAGE

- Attached
- Oversized
- High ceiling (9'6" needed to accommodate a raised-top van)
- Automatic door opener

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- On or near public transportation
- Conveniently located to shopping areas

SOME ADAPTATION TIPS

Many accessibility problems can be avoided or eliminated by making minor structural changes or by utilizing any number of adaptive aids on the market. The following is a brief list of common accessibility problems and some possible adaptations.



PROBLEM

ADAPTATION

Narrow doors

Remove the door. Replace with lever or handle style. Install special hinges. Swing the door in the opposite direction, or consider widening the doorway.

Round knob fixtures/ hardware

Replace with lever or handle style.

Switches, outlets and thermostats located too high/low

Use available products for remote control operation of switches and outlets; attach extensions to switches; lower thermostat.

Lack of maneuvering room in the kitchen for wheelchair

Consider removing some base cabinets to provide maneuvering room and knee spaces under countertops.

Wall cabinets that are too high

Lower existing cabinets, add some new cabinets or add a free-standing storage cabinet.

High countertops

Substitute a drop leaf cart with wheels. Leaf can be raised for food preparation and cart can be rolled to stove and refrigerator.

Standard fire alarms

For persons with hearing disabilities, install visual alarm systems that are triggered to go off when the standard alarm does.

Standard doorbells

Again, visual devices can be attached to the doorbell, even the door itself, to alert persons with hearing disabilities to visitors.

Standard height toilets and bathroom fixtures

Most hospital and medical supply companies carry products that can be added on to standard toilets to raise the seat height. Many types of adaptive bathtub and shower aids are also on the market.

■
These are just a few adaptations that are possible to increase the accessibility and comfort of a home occupied by a person with a disability, or a person with functional limitations due to aging.

■
There are numerous companies that offer products designed to improve the accessibility and ease of living in a given house.

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