



National Network

Information, Guidance and Training on the
Americans with Disabilities Act

Call us toll-free
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Find your regional center at
www.adata.org

OPENING DOORS TO EVERYONE

People with disabilities are the largest and fastest-growing minority in the U.S. They control \$1 trillion in total annual income. They have friends, family members, and business colleagues who accompany them to events and outings. And they use businesses and facilities that are accessible to them.

How can businesses provide access to people with disabilities? They can begin by opening their doors, literally. Accessible doors welcome everyone – and they're required by law.

Legal Requirements for Doors

The Basics

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) covers a wide variety of private businesses, as well as all the agencies of state and local governments. The ADA requires that these entities provide access to their programs, goods and services.

Businesses or buildings that are open or offer services to the general public are called “places of public accommodation” by the ADA. Places of public accommodation and buildings constructed by state or local governments must be fully accessible to people with disabilities if built after January 26, 1992.

Places of public accommodation built before that date must undertake “readily achievable barrier removal.” This consists of activities that can be easily carried out without much difficulty or expense. What is readily achievable will vary from one business to another, and will depend on a number of factors, including existing structural conditions and the financial resources of the business. Tax incentives may help defray some of the costs (more info: <http://www.ada.gov/taxincent.htm>).

State and local governments must also take steps to ensure access to the programs and

activities they offer in inaccessible facilities. In addition, state and local building codes may require different or additional accessibility features.

Door Accessibility Requirements

Which doors should be accessible?

At least one door should be accessible at these locations:

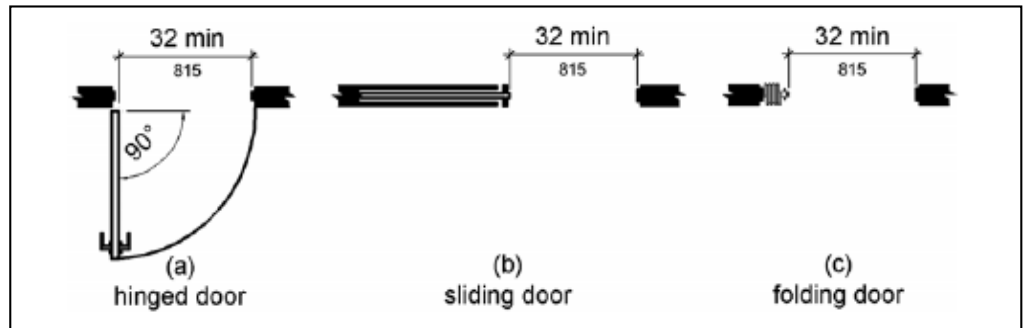
- ✓ Each accessible entrance (at least 60% of public entrances in newly built facilities must be accessible to individuals who use wheelchairs or have mobility impairments).
- ✓ Each tenant space in a mall or other building with multiple business tenants.
- ✓ Accessible rooms and spaces within buildings.
- ✓ Entrances to buildings from all parking structures, tunnels or elevated walkways.
- ✓ At least one restricted or secured entrance (if applicable).
- ✓ Along each building's required route of escape or evacuation.
- ✓ Public entrances serving different fixed routes within transit facilities.

Good to know: Although automatic doors can provide greater accessibility, they are not required by the ADA Standards.

Common Door Accessibility Issues

Clear width

Accessible doors should provide at least 32 inches of clear width. Clear width is measured between the face of the door itself and the opposite stop.



Hardware

Door hardware must not require more than 5 lbs. of force to operate. It must also be operable with one hand and without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist. Lever handles and some other types comply with this requirement. Traditional round doorknobs are not accessible, as they require tight grasping and twisting to turn.

Thresholds

Thresholds cannot be higher than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch at accessible doors, including sliding doors. However, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch is allowed at all existing doors when beveled on each side with a slope not steeper than 1:2. Thresholds higher than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch must be beveled at 1:2 slope maximum.

Maneuvering space

Doors require a certain amount of clear space around them to allow individuals using wheelchairs or other mobility devices to:

- Approach the door;
- Reach the door or door hardware;
- Open the door while remaining outside the swing of the door (if it's a swinging type);

- Maneuver through the doorway; and
- Close the door behind themselves.

The space required varies depending on the type of door and the direction of approach. In all cases, the maneuvering space should have a level surface, that is, a maximum slope of 1:48.

“Peepholes”

Lowered peepholes are not typically required. However, in certain types of accessible rooms, such as a hotel guest room, it's considered best practice to provide two peepholes. One peephole should be at “typical” height, and the other located 43 inches above the floor.

Closing speed

Doors that snap closed quickly make it difficult for users, particularly those with disabilities, to get through safely. Doors with closers should take at least 5 seconds to move from the open position at 90 degrees to 12 degrees from the latch. Doors with spring hinges should take at least 1.5 seconds to close from the open position of 70 degrees. Closing times for automatic doors vary depending on the type of door (swinging, sliding or folding) as well as the dimensions and weight of the door. American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A156.10 covers the requirements for “full power” automatic doors; ANSI A156.19 addresses “low energy” or “power assisted” doors.



Force

Interior accessible doors should require no more than 5 lbs. of force to open. This applies to interior hinged doors and gates, as well as sliding and folding doors. The ADA Standards do not specify the opening force for exterior doors, though some state and local building codes may have requirements. Typical maximum opening force for exterior doors ranges from 8.5 to 10 lbs. Doors designated as fire doors must have the minimum opening force allowed by the local authority.

Smooth Door Surfaces

Canes, wheelchairs and other mobility devices can snag on projections on door surfaces. The push side of new swinging doors and gates that are within 10 inches of the finish floor or ground must have smooth surfaces. The smooth surface should extend the full width of the door. Any spaces created by the addition of kick plates should be capped. These requirements do not apply to sliding doors and some tempered glass doors.

About Our Organization

Northwest ADA Center provides technical assistance, information, and training regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act. Information is provided from the regional office in Washington State and state offices in Alaska, Idaho, and Oregon. Specialists are available to answer specific questions about all titles of the ADA and accessibility of the built environment. Training staff offer presentations to businesses, organizations, schools, people with disabilities, and the general public.

For more information about accessibility requirements for doors (and facilities):

U.S. Department of Justice:

<http://www.ada.gov>

2010 ADA Standards:

http://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards_index.htm

U.S. Access Board:

www.access-board.gov

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Content was developed by Northwest ADA Center, and is based on professional consensus of ADA experts and the ADA National Network.

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