



# Customer care for those with accessibility needs

## #GreenWays4ALL



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## Customer care for those with accessibility needs

The accessibility of establishments, together with the service provided by their staff in terms of customer care (to those with or without disabilities), make an essential contribution to customer satisfaction and loyalty

It is therefore important for staff attending the public to receive training that will provide them with an in-depth awareness of the needs of people with disabilities and to develop the skills required to give them the appropriate attention and service.



## BASIC RULES

These are the 10 basic rules that you need to take into account when attending people with accessibility requirements:

1. Always address the person with a disability (NOT his or her companion, guide, or sign language interpreter).
2. Treat the customer naturally. If there are communication difficulties, you need to ensure that you have conveyed your message correctly and that it has been understood.
3. Before providing help, you should first ask if it is needed and in what way you can help.
4. Know the establishment's level of accessibility and provide information in this regard clearly and accurately.
5. Do not display impatience and allow the necessary time for any action or communicative process.
6. There are no taboo words. It is natural to say to a blind person "see you later" or to someone in a wheelchair "step lively".
7. You need to avoid being overprotective and to treat people according to their age and needs.
8. Be careful about physical contact. Avoid touching people and their aids (stick, wheelchair, guide dog) without their permission.
9. Avoid antiquated and pejorative terms such as "invalid", "deficient", "deaf-mute", "handicapped", etc. and always speak of "person with a disability".
10. If a customer asks for a specific place or adaptation, understand the request as a need to which you need to respond positively.





## SPECIFIC RULES

In addition to these general rules, you need to bear in mind specific rules applicable to each type of disability.

This leaflet only includes the most common rules.

More comprehensive information on these guidelines will become available at this website:

<http://greenways4all.org/publications/>.

Everyone who is in direct contact with customers or users should be aware of these guidelines.

Staff responsible for cleaning rooms also need to be aware of these guidelines, since in the case of blind people, for example, leaving things where the user left them is vital for them to be able to find them again, and to prevent them from tripping over things or becoming disoriented. Therefore staff in charge of cleaning rooms also need to be informed and trained.





## PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

### PEOPLE WALKING SLOWLY AND/OR ON CRUTCHES

In order to attend people who walk slowly and/or on crutches you need to adjust your walking speed to theirs. If they ask for help, offer them your arm, and be mindful of any obstacles that may be in their path.

Help them with anything they may be carrying.

When they need to wait, provide them with somewhere to sit, and never separate them from their crutches.



### PEOPLE USING A WHEELCHAIR



When talking to people in wheelchairs you should stand in front of them a certain distance away, never behind them or where they need to turn their head or look up.

Some people with physical disabilities and wheelchair users have an assistance dog which has the right to go anywhere the customer with a disability does.

If you see any kind of obstacle for a person in a wheelchair, ask them if they need help and what kind of help they need.





## VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE

### HOW TO TREAT BLIND PEOPLE

When addressing blind people, identify yourself, and if you know the person's name, use it so they will know you are talking to them.

You can tell them you want to greet them by taking their hand. To attract their attention you can touch them on the hand or shoulder.

If necessary, say what you are doing or what you are going to do. If you are going to move away, tell the person expressly, especially when you are in a group. Speak slowly and clearly, but without shouting, always looking directly at the person's face.

Place yourself where the person can see you, especially if he or she has some residual vision.

You should not follow a blind person without telling them, as they will notice and it will create a sense of insecurity.

It is essential to be tidy and not move things around in order to prevent customers with impaired vision from tripping over or becoming disoriented.

### HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH AND GUIDE A VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSON

Be precise and specific; use meaningful expressions like "to your right", "in front" etc. because they indicate a concrete position.

In a dangerous situation, use words like "stop" or "don't move" to stop the person from continuing to move forward. Immediately afterwards explain in words where the danger lay and give help if necessary.

If the customer so desires you can explain the layout of the establishment and make a reconnaissance tour so they can later orient themselves and get around independently.

When guiding a customer with impaired vision, offer your arm and walk slightly ahead of them.

Warn them of any obstacles in their path and, when accompanying, do not leave a visually impaired person without warning.





## PEOPLE WITH A HEARING DISABILITY

### PEOPLE WITH SPEECH DIFFICULTIES

In the case of people with speech difficulties, try to understand them, taking into account that their rhythm and pronunciation are different from what you are used to. If you haven't understood what they said, tell them so that they can use some other way of communicating if they so wish. Do not pretend to have understood something that you haven't.



### PEOPLE WITH HEARING DIFFICULTIES

Attract their attention with a small gesture before speaking. Never speak when not in eye contact; speak face to face, naturally, and enunciate well.

If they do not understand you, repeat the message or phrase you have said in a simpler, but correct manner, using words with a similar meaning.

Make natural gestures which will help your listener while you are speaking, or make use of the written word. If possible it is advisable to have someone available who knows how to sign.

### PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

The main barriers that people with intellectual disabilities have to overcome are to do with understanding and the correct interpretation of messages. For this reason you need to speak slowly, clearly and simply.

Ask short questions requiring short answers. Make sure that the customer has understood your message by asking them if they have understood and, if not, try to rephrase the question or message.

Treat people with intellectual disabilities in a manner consistent with their age.

When waiting for an answer, be patient and give the person time. Respect their speed of response.



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**The EU funded project Greenways4ALL aims to move forward towards the creation of accessible tourism products linked to greenways.**



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Texts: PREDIF  
Edition: AEVV-EGWA



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