

[Community Living](#) | [Wheelchair University](#) | [Products and Services](#)
[Discussion Area](#) | [Town Hall](#)

[Help](#) | [Search](#) | [Site Map](#) | [What's New](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Home](#)

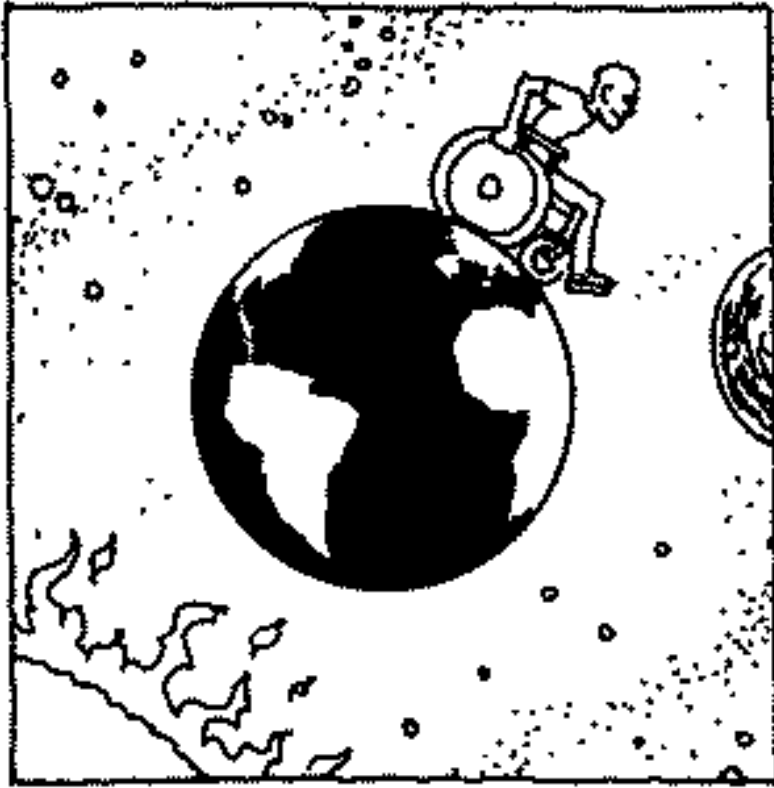
WheelchairNet

The Manual Wheelchair Training Guide

by Axelson P, Chesney D, Minkel J & Perr A
© 1998 by PAX Press, a division of Beneficial Designs, Inc.
Santa Cruz, California
(831) 429-8447
paxpress@beneficialdesigns.com

Section 4.5

Traveling

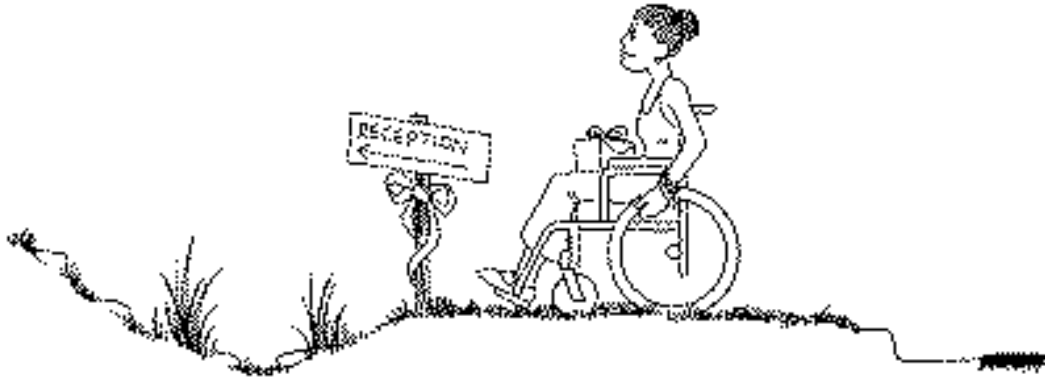


Have you ever looked forward to a fabulous meal at a great restaurant, dressed in your best, and fought your way onto the bus, or endured a heart-stopping cab ride, only to find the place's located up a flight of stairs and booked for the night? Sometimes it's not a lack of access but a lack of information that will make your journey difficult. Taking a few minutes to call ahead can solve many problems and lots of time in the long run. Be specific when asking questions; many people's idea of "accessible" may be very different from yours. Don't be surprised if you are told a restaurant is accessible even if it occupies the upper floor of a building without an elevator. If a destination you have been told is accessible turns out to be inaccessible, request an interview with the facility manager. Tell the manager that "accessible" means an environment in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), and that your inability to use the facility probably indicates the establishment needs to improve its access measures. Appendix A contains more information about the ADA.

Travel Planning Tips

Part of the appeal of going to new places is the fun of exploring the unknown. Though you may think advance reconnaissance is cheating and dull, it is usually worthwhile to obtain basic access information about the site to avoid disappointments. You don't want to arrive at a wedding, resplendent in nice clothing, only to find you must cross a muddy path to get to the reception. Nor would it be amusing to arrive at a hotel and discover their "accessible guest room" has a shower stall sized to accommodate slender children but not you and your shower chair. Make a practice of calling ahead of time and talking to

friends or acquaintances who have been there before.



Calling ahead could save you from getting muddy on your way to the event.

Consider asking the following questions:

- What kinds of obstacles will you face en route to your destination? Is there an elevator or stairs? Do the curbs have ramps? Will someone be there to help you over the lawn that's been transformed into a snow field?
- Is the route all indoors, or is a portion outdoors?
- Are there ramps or elevators leading to different levels of the destination? Are the elevators working? Are there signs to indicate the location of elevators and ramps?

Hotel Rooms

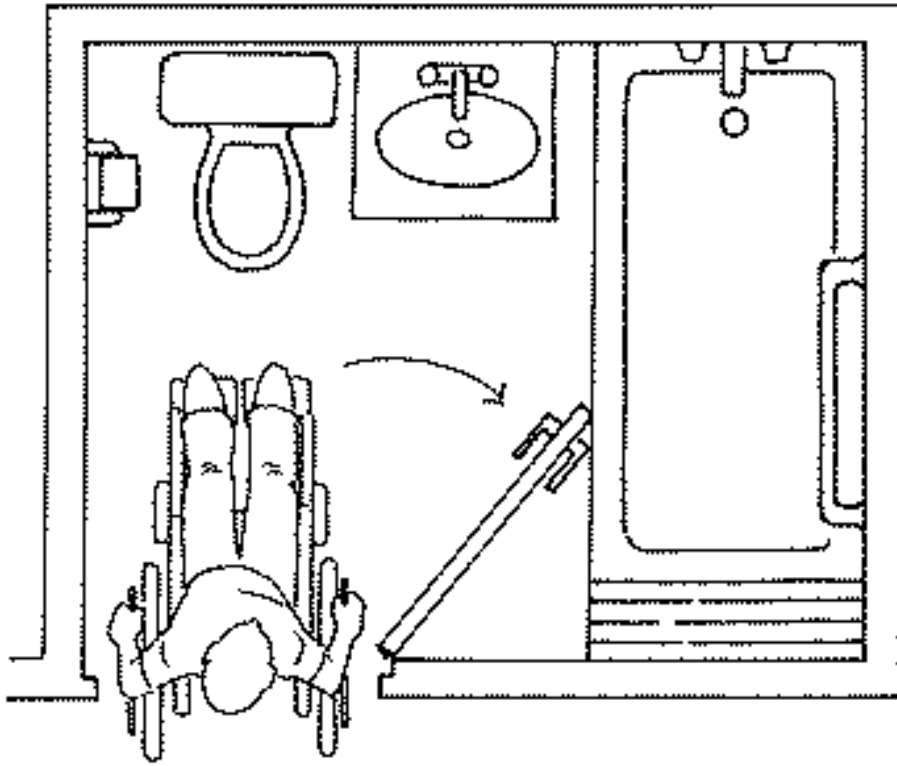
- Is there a wheelchair-accessible room? What floor is it on? Is there an elevator?
- How wide is the door leading to the room? What kind of knobs, handles, or latches does it have?
- Can you move furniture out of the way to make it more accessible? If you do move furniture, let the housekeeping staff know you don't want it put back in place each morning. You may also be able to arrange for the actual removal of unneeded furniture from the room.
- Can you move the bed to position the wheelchair next to it for transfers? Some hotel beds are on immovable pedestals.
- Can you reach the temperature controls and drapery cords?
- Is the telephone within easy reach from the bed? Is the TV remote control moveable or is it bolted down? If it is bolted, it may be out of reach.
- How big is the bathroom? How wide is the door? Does it swing in or out? Is there a bathtub? Where is the door in relation to the toilet and bathtub? Are there grab bars? Are the towels placed within reach?

If your hotel room poses access problems, try brainstorming solutions with the management. For example, ask them to wrap towels around exposed hot water pipes under sinks, or remove the bathroom door if the opening is too narrow for your wheelchair.

Restrooms

For shower seating, pack a webbed beach chair when you travel.

- Is the restroom on the same floor as your destination (e.g., meeting room, reception, etc.)?
- How wide is the restroom doorway? Does the door open in or out? Can it be opened in a single motion (e.g., swinging door, pull handle)?
- How big is the restroom? Is there room to maneuver inside? How big is the stall?
- Is there a grab bar?



This tub would be usable if the door could close behind the wheelchair user. Calling beforehand could have prevented this situation.

New Environments

Your capabilities will vary depending on your environment. For example, wheeling around a rural Midwestern town is very different from slipping through the throngs of New York City. Many factors affect wheelchair mobility, including the upkeep of sidewalks and streets.

[Return to the main Manual Wheelchair Training Guide page](#)

[Return to WheelchairNet](#)

Please [let us know](#) if you find a link that doesn't work *or* have an idea about something to include!

Contact information:

RERC on Wheeled Mobility

5051 Forbes Tower
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-647-1273

© [Copyright 1999](#) University of Pittsburgh. All rights reserved.

No quotes from the materials contained herein may be used in any media without attribution to WheelchairNet and the [RERC on Wheeled Mobility](#).