

How Communication Accessible Are You?

How accessible are you for people who have communication difficulties?

How communication accessible is your business or service?

Take this quick Self Assessment Quiz to find out!

Do you talk directly to the person?

It can be daunting to communicate with someone who has difficulty understanding you or trouble getting their message across.

However, it is important to talk directly to the individual instead of the person with them. After all, they are the customers.

Smiling, saying hello or shaking hands (if appropriate) can put a person at ease and creates a more positive experience. Customers are more likely to return to a business that is welcoming and friendly.

Do you provide the person with enough time to communicate?

It often takes longer for a person with a communication disability to get their message across. Some people with a communication disability also have difficulty understanding speech.

It is important to provide the person with adequate time to communicate effectively with you.

If it takes someone longer to get their message across - be patient, polite and remain calm. Check that you have understood the person correctly and make sure that they have no more questions or comments to add.

Do you include pictures for people who have difficulty reading? For example, do you include pictures or photos in your pamphlets or menus?

*Did you know that 46% of Australian adults have difficulty reading information?**

It is a great idea to provide information with photos or pictures for people who have difficulty reading.

Eye-catching and visually attractive pamphlets and menus are often required to stand out. Simple information written as clearly as possible is useful for people who have difficulty understanding print. This could mean having clear, written information on plain white paper, and perhaps increasing the size of the text.

Some people may need to have written information read aloud to them or have the information in a place that is easy to see. It can be helpful to use gesture, point to items, show pictures or write the information to help the person understand.

A pen and paper may be necessary if the person needs to write or draw their message, or needs you to write or draw your message.

People need to know how much things cost without having to ask. Prices should be clearly displayed and easy to read.

If a person cannot understand you when you say how much something is, it's important that the person can see how much to pay. For example, does the price come up on the cash register?

*Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006)

□ **Do you have easy to read signage or displays that people know what service your business provides?**

Can you see the name of the business or service from the front of the building? Are there items or displays in the window (if applicable)?

Do you place service desks, signs and items at eye level where customers who use wheelchairs and scooters can see and point to them? Not everyone is able to see over a tall counter top or display. Can every person get to or point to what they want?

Is your shop or service large enough that it could benefit from a map to help people find their way around?

Are there signs in your business to help people find things such as; toilets, exits, public telephones, information desks or where to pay?

Are signs in your business big enough with easy to read text e.g. contrasting colours?

For example, the signs for men's and women's toilets have the commonly used symbols for male and female as well as the words 'male' and 'female'

□ **Do you communicate with individuals using their preferred method?**

Individuals with communication disabilities may have cards explaining their preferred method of communication or be able to tell you or show you how to best communicate with him/her.

Take notice of this and communicate with the person the way they ask or show you.

It can get very loud in some shops and businesses. This can make it difficult to talk to and understand people who have difficulty communicating, particularly if they use an electronic communication device to get their message across. It's a great idea to turn the music down, come out from behind the counter or find somewhere more private, if you think this could be a problem.