

Is Your Accommodation Accessible?

We here at SCI-BC have developed this guide to assist you with understanding some of the key features that make your accommodation accessible. We will be focusing on features that specifically make an accommodation wheelchair accessible.

Some features are mandatory to make an accommodation wheelchair accessible while others, although nice to have, could be considered optional. If you have features that are on the "optional" list you should consider making the necessary changes to provide a hassle free living environment.

*Please note that this list is not intended to be exhaustive and provide every possible accessible feature available. It focuses on the basic features of access.

Entrance

- No Step Entry - This feature is the most desirable for someone using a wheelchair or scooter. No Step Entries can be constructed to be blended into the design of the accommodation and be aesthetically pleasing as well as offer the most functional entry and egress from an accommodation. No Step Entrances are usually designed into new building construction however can be constructed on some preexisting buildings.

Here is an example of a home with a no step entrance:



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- **Ramped or Modified Entry** - This feature is typically constructed on an existing accommodation to provide wheelchair access. Check with the local building codes on the necessary ramp gradients. Building codes and construction guidelines are listed on the SCIBC Accessible Housing BC webpage. Ramps can be designed to fit most homes however the higher the entrance is off the ground the longer the ramp needs to be in order to provide an acceptable gradient. In cases where the entry is too high from the ground to ramp, a porch lift may be required.

Here is an example of a simple ramp (left) and a porch lift (right)



- **Wider Doorways** - Wider doorways are required throughout the accommodation. Not only at the entrance but to other rooms such as the bathroom, kitchen and bedrooms. Your doorway width should be a minimum of 800mm or approximately 32 inches.

The BC Building Access Handbook states:

Doors in the open position must provide a clear passage of 800 mm which allows for persons in wheelchairs to safely pass through. (See Figure 3.8.21.) Although it is possible for a person in a wheelchair to negotiate a narrower opening, greater precisions necessary on their part. Also, if an opening less than 800 mm wide is approached from any direction other than straight on, a greater amount of maneuvering is required.

Bathroom

- **Increased Space** - The interior of the bathroom should provide sufficient space to maneuver a wheelchair. There should be enough room to allow for a 1.5 metre (5 foot) unobstructed turning radius in the bathroom space
- **Wider Doorway** - Door swing should be out and not into the bathroom. The ideal width of the doorway is 800mm (32inches). It is advised to measure the width of the wheelchair being used should your doorway be narrower than 800mm to ensure safe and easy passage.

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- Vanity - There are many styles of accessible vanities but the key feature is to provide enough clearance for someone using a wheelchair to get their knees under the sink and up close to the vanity.

Here is an example of an accessible vanity. Note plenty of clear space beneath the sink.



- Fixtures - There are many types of fixtures in the bathroom from toilet paper dispensers, mirrors, towel bars and soap dispensers. It is important that these features are within the reach of someone who is in a seated position. The mirror adjusted at a height or appropriate angle and levered faucets that can be operated with limited hand function.
- Grab Bars - Are not always needed however someone with limited mobility, particularly in the location of a bathtub or shower stall, grab bars offer support and safety.
- Optional - These are features that go beyond basic accessibility requirements and are installed to fulfill the specific needs of the occupant based on their level of disability. For example a high level quadriplegic may require more accessible features such as an accessible shower stall or overhead lifting devices.
 - Wheelchair accessible shower stall
 - Grab bars
 - Overhead ceiling track lift system
 - Automatic door openers
 - Kitchen counter, cupboards and appliances (if the person with the disability cooks).
 - Raised toilet

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Kitchen

- Kitchen counters and cupboards - A basic level of accessibility would require an accessible work counter to prepare meals, a stove with front mounted controls and appliance such as microwaves situated in a location that is easily accessed. The degree of accessibility is determined by how functional the person with the disability needs to be in the kitchen. For example a stay at home with a disability, with 2 small children will require a fully functional accessible kitchen where as another person with a disability may not be responsible to prepare meals at all.
- Stove - A counter top stove is the most functional as it is situated at a height that is easily in reach.
- Appliances
- Electrical sockets

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