

## INTRODUCTION:

Accessibility guides are like a library: a shared space where resources are available for all to browse, borrow and use.

## A. STARTER PACKS: PREPARATION AS KEY (BEFORE)

We all make decisions based on the information we have at the time. Preparation is key. Having the right tools and guidance before you begin makes inclusion easier for all.

### 1. Language and accessibility:

Language is an important part of communication. Some words may appear harmless but can exclude or oppress by reinforcing ableist ideas. These notes highlight examples commonly used and offer guidance on how to communicate more inclusively. Why language matters when talking about neurodiversity and disability.

- Many disabilities and conditions are invisible. We can't assume someone's experience based on how they look
- Disabilities, chronic conditions and illnesses are real, and not things people can simply "overcome" with effort, or positivity.
- Words like normal, universal, or typical suggest there's only one right way to exist. In reality, people's bodies, minds, and experiences are diverse.

### Phrases to avoid, when, and understanding why:

- *Everyone is a little bit autistic* → They are not
- *You don't look disabled* → Many disabilities are invisible.
- *I'm so OCD/Blind/ADHD* → Using medical terms casually misrepresents real conditions, and minimises lived experiences. Avoid using conditions as descriptors.
- *They're so rude* → Social norms can be difficult to interpret or apply. Labelling someone as rude may dismiss genuine differences in communication.
- *That's crazy/insane* → This is psychophobic.
- *That's crazy/insane* → This is psychophobic.

### A note on language in practice:

Language is flexible. Even when plain and clear language is useful, communication doesn't need to be polished or perfect to be valid. We welcome different voices and ways of expression. For this reason, if a mistake is made, acknowledge it with care, and move forward.

## 2. Knowledge and representation: where people are coming from

When talking about disability, neurodivergence, and accessibility, reflect on where your knowledge comes from, some people have:

- Lived experience
- Studied disability theory, read first-hand accounts
- Learned through conversations and collective practices

All of these ways of knowing are valid. Acknowledging them helps us better understand one another's positions and work together more effectively.

### Questions to consider:

- Who is speaking, and from what standpoint (lived experience, academic study...)?
- Whose voices are centred, and whose are missing?
- Remember that sometimes, simply creating a welcoming space can matter more than expertise.

### Understanding ableism as intersectional

- Ableism doesn't exist in isolation. It intersects with other forms of oppression, such as classism, colonialism, homophobia, racism, sexism, and transphobia.
- Resisting ableism can mean questioning or moving away from systems that uphold these oppressions.
- For example: choosing open-source or community-driven tools instead of big tech, or thinking carefully about how we share and use resources.

### Group dynamics

- Practice awareness, flexibility, and generosity
- One person's access needs or style of communication may sometimes conflict with another's.
- Different people may prefer different language to identify themselves for different reasons

Consider who makes up the group. For example, ask if the group is:

- Neurodiverse (a mix of neurotypical and neurodivergent people)
- Neurohomogenous (all neurodivergent in the same way)
- Allistic (non-autistic)
- Predominantly neurotypical

Each configuration will shape how people communicate, connect, and understand each other.

### 3. Material Toolkit:

A material toolkit consists of physical and tangible resources that support accessibility and self-regulation, bypassing object permanence (the idea that out of sight = out of mind). This material toolkit should also include a large-print access guide and directions to an MP3/audio recording.

## Sensory tools

- Stim toys (traditional or homemade)
- Olfactory objects (lavender, chamomile, mint ...)
- Snacks or food for oral stimulation (crunchy, minty, chewy foods or biteable stim toys)
- Sound management (earplugs, ear defenders, noise cancelling headphones)
- Proprioception & vestibular aids (pillows, plushie, blankets, weighted blankets, shields)
- Light & environment tools (sunglasses, hats, umbrellas)

## Communication aids

- Whiteboard and pen, or blank online document, for non-verbal communication
- Communication badges (traffic light system)

## Support resources

- Sunflower lanyards
- Designated access facilitator
- Timers or alarms to aid with interoception
- Emotional check-in tools to aid with alexithymia (Feelingwheel App, or "emotional battery" prompts)

## 4. Information packs:

Providing clear, consistent information in advance supports informed decision-making and allows people to plan for their own accessibility. It also helps reduce anxiety caused by uncertainty.

Information packs should use plain, easy-to-read language and be available in multiple accessible formats (large print, audio, video), be translated into relevant language, and include image descriptions.

Content should include:

- Organisational information: schedule, clear start, end, and break times.
- Travel information: step-by-step guide, maps, transport details.
- Venue information: layout, sensory details, facilities.
- People: who will be there, what will their roles be.
- Social expectations: relevant group norms and interaction styles.
- Contacts: relevant people, access facilitators, medical support.

## B. IN PRACTICE AND IN TIME (DURING)

Being part of an event can be overwhelming, here are a few things to keep in mind for both yourself and others, to help everyone feel more comfortable.

### 1. Self-practice:

- Be welcoming and understanding
- Avoid strong smells (perfume, smoke).

- Be mindful of volume (while some people are sensitive to noise, others may be unaware of their own loudness).
- Welcome movement and mobility over sitting still.
- Welcome slowness, different paces, and rhythm.
- Welcome stimming and non-verbal communication
- Welcome silence; constant communication is not necessary.
- Beware of internalised ableism
- Avoid body or food-related comments.
- Use image descriptions when sharing images.

Remember that you can always do, don't do, modify, report, witness, recover.

### 2. Social interactions:

Social pressure can be a major source of stress. Here are a few ways this could be addressed.

- Provide quiet times.
- Provide a separate quiet crash space.
- Use communication badges (traffic light system).
- Provide prompt cards for interaction.
- When giving instructions, give concrete examples, and avoid irony, sarcasm, or vague language
- Assign access support workers for both participants and facilitators.
- Offer live captioning or sign language
- Respect demand avoidance; avoid putting people on the spot.
- Use group-making tools to reduce social stress.

### 3. Scheduling:

- Share schedules in advance, with reminders.
- Build in a routine (daily check-ins, pronoun rounds, quiet starts, ...) while balancing flexibility (respect time blindness).
- Distinguish between rigid and flexible times (a train's departure may be rigid, while meeting in the park is flexible).
- Build in quiet times and breaks (travel time ≠ break).
- Consider including soft start times for gathering, and rigid times for beginning activities.
- Allow breaks before and after social meals.
- Include reminders for interoception & alexithymia.
- Provide "5 minutes left" signals.
- Consider scheduling body doubling sessions for important tasks.

### 4. Flexibility and change:

#### Needing to step out

Make leaving and re-entering easy and safe: people will be more likely to do so if they need, if they can.

- Ensure note-taking
- Share documentary/archive resources in multiple formats

## Changes

- Announce changes both verbally and in writing: this both confirms and reminds
- Explain: navigating change is often aided by understanding and being aware of why these changes have been made.

### 5. Feedback on access:

Being generous with feedback (even critical or uncomfortable feedback) supports inclusion and learning moving forward. Plan a time to reflect afterwards, either individually, or as a group.

### 6. Spaces:

#### Venues and in-person spaces

Structural access considerations:

- Step-free routes, ramps, lifts, wide corridors
- Accessible toilets, food, and water facilities
- Clear signage
- Safe "landing zones"
- Clean, uncluttered spaces
- Floors accessible for sitting, standing, lying, or wheelchair use
- Make time for breaks as needed when journeying.

Sensory access considerations:

- Dimmable, multi-source, warm lighting
- Avoid buzzing/motion-activated lights in rest areas
- Provide food/water access
- Use sign-language applause over clapping when possible
- Avoid echo-prone spaces for noisy events
- Limit background noise/music
- Keep spaces scent-free

#### Virtual Spaces:

- Share schedules in advance, with reminders.
- Recognise that tech usability varies.
- Prioritise Web Content Accessibility Guidelines-compliant tools (WCAG).
- Offer multiple communication options: email, text, voice messages, video messages, calls, polls, non-linguistic tools.

Taking into account different preferred means of communication, here are some ideas. These can be either open-ended conversations, or scheduled with a start and finish time:

- Emails
- Phone texting platforms
- Voice messages
- Video messages
- Audio calls
- Video calls
- Polls, pictures, or other nonverbal communication

## C. TRAVELLING AND SPENDING TIME OUTSIDE OF ONE'S HOME OR SAFE SPACES

### 1. General travel:

- Provide detailed travel information packs (maps, routes, sensory information, crowd expectations).
- Allow extra connection time.
- Reserve accessible seating.
- Provide both printed and digital tickets.
- Respect differences in pace and rhythm.
- Agree how much time is needed between arrival and following event

### 2. Accommodation

- Temperature control (blankets, thermostats, windows).
- Blackout curtains, soundproofing.
- Light control (no automatic lights in rest areas).
- Accessible bathrooms (step-free, shower seats, ramps).
- Quiet room locations.
- Frequent cleaning
- Reliable Wi-Fi
- Power outlets.

### 3. Spending time on those journeys and stays with others

- Trained staff in accessibility awareness.
- Agree on quiet times and personal space; do not assume.

### End note

Accessibility is an ongoing practice of listening, awareness, and allowing everyone to participate on their own terms.

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Written in 2025 by Coby-Rae Crosbie for Landing Zones (Unruly Ecologies. Art, Attention, Neurodiversity)

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# access guide

by reading this  
access guide  
i'm fighting  
the object  
permanence  
of access