

Offering an Accessible Workshop by Susan Purser Hope

Introduction: This document is a guide for those artists who would like to be able to offer access to workshops and their studio for people who are in wheelchairs, on Zimmer frames and crutches or have other physical limitations. This is a personal overview and is based on guidelines provided in the Centre for Accessible Environments' "Designing for Accessibility - an Essential Guide for Public Buildings" publication and my own experience of living with parents who both had disabilities.

It is offered to help fellow glass artists but it is not all encompassing and is based on a common sense approach of trying to offer solutions which are affordable and easy to implement. The reality is that after considering the suggestions included in this document, you may not be able to offer appropriate access to your studio and disability friendly workshops.

The guide is based on my own experience of working in a fused glass studio so other considerations would have to be made for those working in a hot glass studio. This guide does not take into account restrictions relating to the coronavirus pandemic. Please see "Running A Typical Workshop During The Covid-19 Pandemic as at 20th July, 2020" for more information.

Booking

Include an opportunity on your booking form for participants to detail any disability that they may have. Follow this up verbally and discuss the extent of any disability prior to workshop attendance so that you can ensure an enjoyable workshop experience for the participant. Check how you can help the participant access your studio, the toilet and participate in the workshop.

Preparation

Parking

Consider where person can park and ensure that there is sufficient space around it for them to exit the car and to access wheelchair, sticks etc.

Ensure that parking place is next to the studio or alternatively ensure space available for person to be dropped off outside the front door.

Look at potential routes into the building that avoid uneven surfaces, loose coverings such as gravel, sand or textiles or steep slopes

Access to studio

Routes into the studio

Look at potential routes into the building that avoid uneven surfaces or loose coverings such as gravel, sand or textiles. Check for steep slopes and standing water areas.

The reality is that, if your studio is up a flight of stairs or if access cannot be provided with a mobile ramp, you may not be able to offer appropriate disability friendly workshops.

Steps.

Consider providing a ramp for access over threshold upstand or small number of steps. Check if local mobility centre will hire this out or research on Google or Gumtree for used models.

Providing Assistance

Always ask the wheelchair user or person on Zimmer frame and other mobility appliances how you can assist them. Always ask if help is needed and exactly what you should do. Never automatically help – if may be unwanted or you may do the wrong thing. Be aware of Health and Safety issues as you do not want to injure yourself or potentially the person you are assisting.

Doorways, Corridors and Studio

Check the width of your access door. Is it wide enough for a wheelchair or Zimmer frame to go through? Wheelchairs are about 70cms wide plus the user's arms and hands operating the wheels. A standard Zimmer frame is 66cms wide.

Once inside, ensure that all potential obstructions are removed so that the wheelchair or person on mobility aids can make a safe transit across the area to reach their workspace. Remove throw rugs, clutter, and loose electrical cords. Arrange furniture to allow a clear path so the wheelchair can easily be moved. Don't forget that a turning circle is needed for both a wheelchair and a Zimmer frame. A wheelchair turning circle is approx. 1.50 metres diameter.

Workspace.

Provide a standard height work table with a totally clear space beneath for wheel chair access. Ensure that there is sufficient room around the table for the wheelchair user to be able to access it. Consider how participants access materials. Is it possible to put all materials and tools needed onto the work table? If not, consider wheelchair and Zimmer frame passage to the materials table. Alternatively ensure that you are on hand to assist.

Fire Precautions

In the unlikely event of a fire within your premises, you need to consider how you would evacuate not only able bodied people but also those in wheelchairs and on Zimmer frames, crutches etc. You need to make everyone aware of the evacuation procedures at the beginning of your workshop.

Toilet

If you run workshops from your home or an individual studio, you may have a ground floor toilet. These are usually quite narrow spaces so you may need to assist the participant. This may involve removing the wheelchair or Zimmer frame from the room and closing the door but waiting for the participant to call for you to return with the wheelchair or Zimmer frame.

You may find that providing assistance equipment such as toilet frame or a raised toilet seat will be of great assistance. You could also check if the participant has any equipment that they can bring with them.

A toilet frame easily slips over the toilet. Most models of raised toilet seats clamp on to the rim of the toilet bowl and the original seat remains in place, stuck in the 'up' position.

A toilet frame or a raised toilet seat can be put in place and can be left in situ when the toilet is used by people without disabilities.

If your studio is part of a complex then there is a legal requirement for there to be an accessible toilet on site. Ensure that this is fully operational and is not being used as a store!

Refreshments

Make sure that refreshments are available and easily accessed. Alternatively, either ensure you are readily available to provide refreshments or buddy participants to help each other. If there is a cafe on site or nearby, check that they are accessible. If not, encourage participants to bring lunch with them so that everyone can eat together. Alternatively, obtain menus prior to the workshop and obtain orders from participants at the beginning of the event. You can telephone the order through and it can be collected by one of the participants.

Standard wheelchair footprint: 725 x 1200mm

Minimum space to manoeuvre a standard wheelchair on the spot: 1.50 x 1.50 metres

Corridors and access routes: 900mm

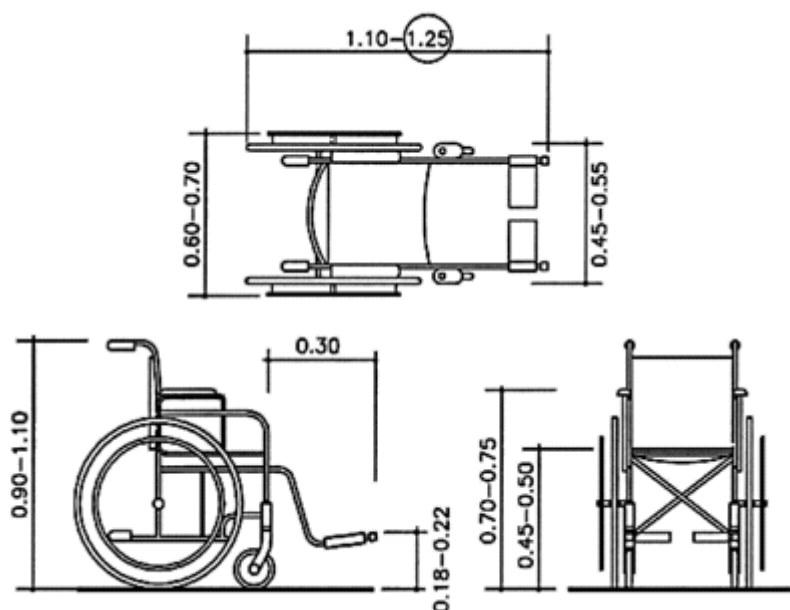
Interior openings for all doors: 800mm

Table/work surface height: 700 – 800mm

Typical knee clearance height for underside of desks and tables: 675 – 725mm

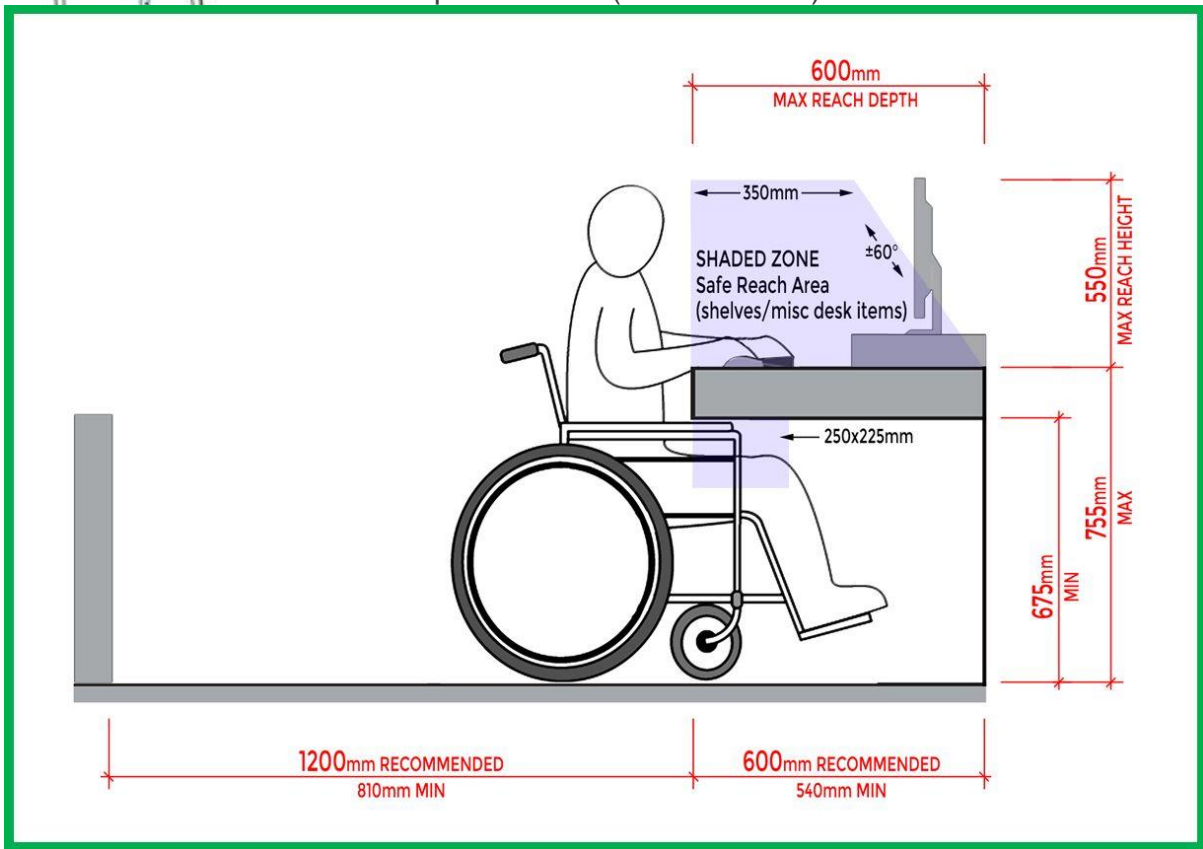
Maximum access ramp slope: 1:12

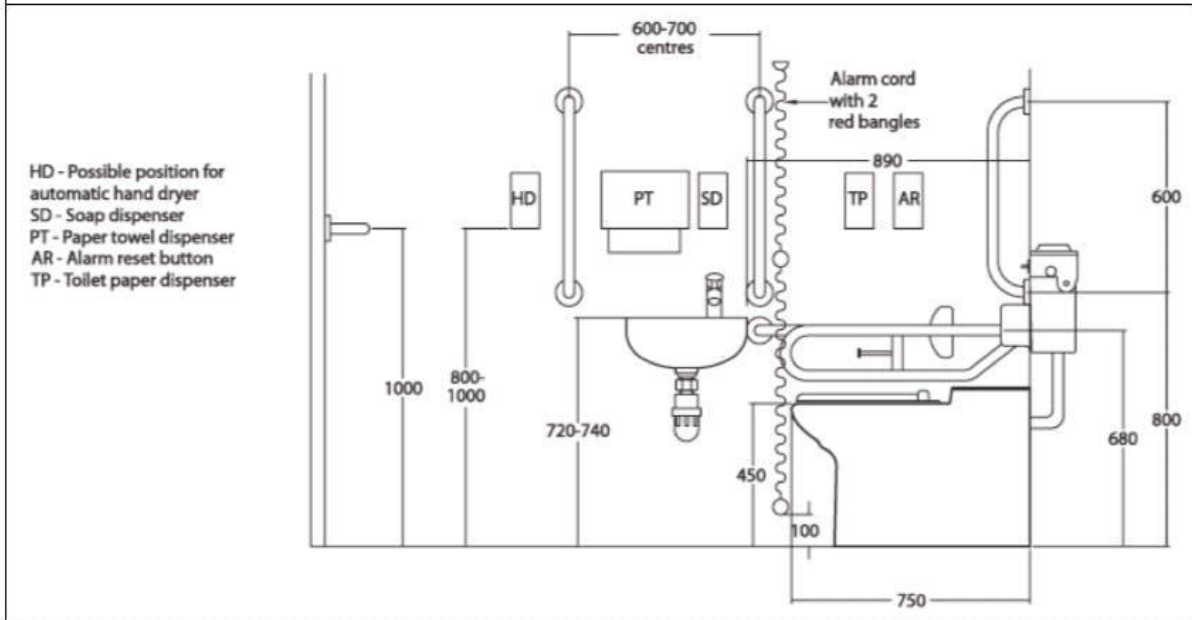
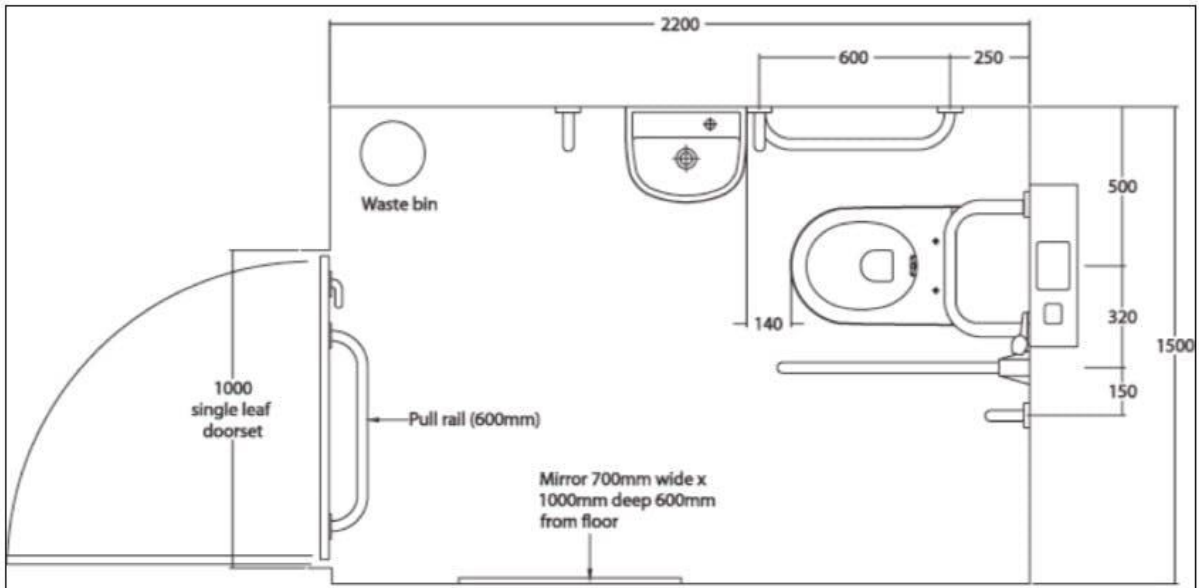
Maximum general ground slope (parking spaces, driveways, aisles etc): 1:48

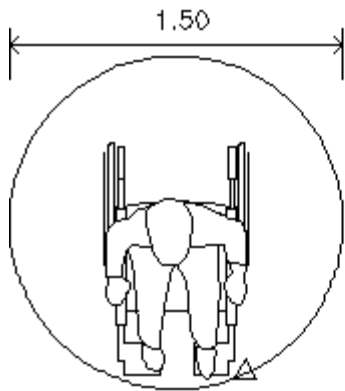
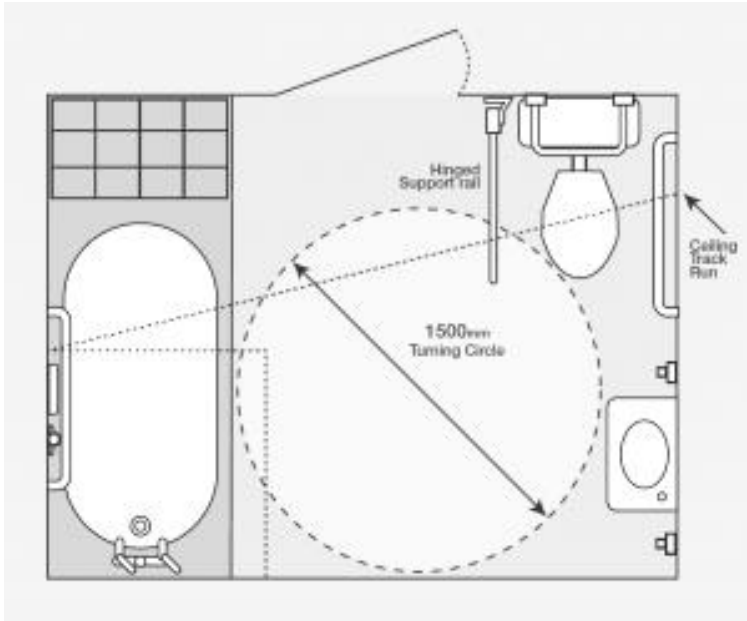




Adjustable height: 81-91.4cm (32 - 36 inches).
Front width: 45.7cm (18 inches).
Rear width: 66cm (26 inches).
Depth: 54.6cm (21 1/2 inches).







Planta

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The Universal Toilet Frame provides horizontal support to make trips to the bathroom that much easier. This is a lightweight yet sturdy frame designed to help you lower and rise from the seat with ease, complete with height adjustable legs and ferrule tips for comfort and stability.

Specifications:

Height: 70-83cm

Length: 48.5cm

Width: 57cm