

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY

Barriers are obstacles. Barriers to accessibility are obstacles that make it difficult — sometimes impossible — for people with disabilities to do the things most of us take for granted — things like going shopping, working, or taking public transit.

When we think of barriers to accessibility, most of us think of physical barriers — like a person who uses a wheelchair not being able to enter a public building because there is no ramp.

The fact is there are many kinds of barriers. Some are visible. Many are invisible.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY

TYPE OF BARRIERS	EXAMPLES
Attitudinal barriers are those that discriminate against people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking that people with disabilities are inferior• Assuming that a person who has a speech impairment can't understand you
Information or communications barriers happen when a person can't easily understand information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Print is too small to read• Websites that can't be accessed by people who are not able to use a mouse• Signs that are not clear or easily understood.
Technology barriers occur when a technology can't be modified to support various assistive devices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A website that doesn't support screen-reading software
Organizational barriers are an organization's policies, practices or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities
Architectural and physical barriers are features of buildings or spaces that cause problems for people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hallways and doorways that are too narrow for a person using a wheelchair, electric scooter or walker• Counters that are too high for a person of short stature• Poor lighting for people with low vision• Doorknobs that are difficult for people with arthritis to grasp• Parking spaces that are too narrow for a driver who uses a wheelchair• Telephones that are not equipped with telecommunications devices for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing