Assessment Tools for Accessibility

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Introduction

This Resource Page describes tools that help make it easier for designers, developers, and contractors to assess, survey, or audit facilities for accessibility for people with disabilities. While several of the tools are intended for new construction or alteration projects, they can also be used to survey existing buildings to identify those features or elements in need of modifications. Keep in mind that once a building is constructed and compliance is called into question, a physical survey of the building and site will be required to identify violations to applicable federal laws, including the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Description

A. Checklists

ADAAG Checklist

Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) Checklist for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG Checklist)

The ADAAG Checklist can be used to "survey places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and transportation facilities for compliance with the new construction and alterations requirements of Title II, and Title III of the ADA." It can be used to identify barriers in existing buildings as well. No special training is needed to use the checklist.
According to the ADDAG Checklist, it must be used in conjunction with the Department of Justice's regulations in 28 CFR Part 36 and the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG), which are reprinted in the appendices to the regulations.

ADA Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal

The ADA Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal helps concerned professionals identify accessibility problems and solutions in existing facilities in order to meet their obligations under the ADA. The goal of the survey process is to plan how to make an existing facility more usable for people with disabilities.

The checklist is based on the four priorities recommended by the Title III regulations for planning readily achievable barrier removal projects:

- Priority 1: Accessible entrance into the facility
- Priority 2: Access to goods and services
- Priority 3: Access to rest-rooms
- Priority 4: Any other measures necessary

Note that not all of the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG) requirements are covered—because full compliance with ADAAG is required only for new construction and alterations. However, whenever possible, ADAAG should be used in making readily achievable modifications. If complying with ADAAG is not readily achievable, a modification that does not fully comply with ADAAG may be undertaken as long as it poses no health or safety risk.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Checklist for Polling Places

The ADA Checklist for Polling Places is "designed to help voting officials determine whether a polling place has basic accessible features needed by most voters with disabilities. It may be used when evaluating the accessibility of potential new polling places and when identifying physical
barriers in existing polling places before temporary or permanent modifications are made to improve accessibility for elections.

Individuals completing the checklist do not necessarily need to be experienced in evaluating buildings and facilities for accessibility. The checklist is designed to prompt the user to check key features by asking questions about sizes, sloped surfaces, and availability of accessible features, and in some areas suggests alternatives if a physical barrier is identified."

**Pocket Guide to the ADAAG**

The Pocket Guide to the ADAAG, developed by Evan Terry Associates, Birmingham, AL, is a convenient, "pocket-sized" resource tool that helps building professionals ensure compliance with the ADA. It can be used to review plans before buildings are constructed and to conduct field assessments for ADA compliance in completed and existing buildings. The Guide includes the most current revisions of the Federal Register's [ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities](https://www.adaag.org/) (ADAAG). The Guide includes the key provisions of the ADA and its referenced technical criteria, which affect how buildings are designed.

**UFAS Accessibility Checklist**

The UFAS Accessibility Checklist enables people to design and survey buildings for compliance with the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). The UFAS Accessibility Checklist includes "all of the technical requirements of UFAS in the logical progression of traveling to and through a building. The 21 survey forms represent elements on the site and in the building. Many of UFAS's general requirements repeat on different forms because they apply to more than one element." All or parts of the survey can be used to assess UFAS compliance. A number of the survey forms, such as Form 20: Postal Facilities, may not apply to the project. As a result, only use those forms that apply.

Special training is not needed to use the checklist. It can be used on-site or to review architectural plans. Utilizing the UFAS Accessibility Checklist during the planning stages of a project will help to ensure compliance with UFAS, which applies to any facility covered by the ABA and Section 504. Note that current DoD policies encourage compliance with the requirements of the ADAAG where those requirements are stricter than UFAS. If local accessibility requirements exist, the most stringent will prevail between local and UFAS/ADA.

**B. Survey Instruments**

**Smart Level (Digital Inclinometer)**
SmartTool smart level (or digital inclinometer).
Courtesy of AccessStore.com

In the past, a builder's level and a tape measure were used to measure slopes. Today, the more efficient smart level, known as a digital inclinometer, can be used to perform the same function easily. The smart level looks like a builder's level, except it has a digital readout that indicates percent slope, degrees, or pitch (inches of rise per foot of run). Measuring slope in percentage is all that is needed to determine whether a slope is compliant. The smart level can be used alone or with a builder's level. First, calibrate it according to manufacturer's instructions; then place it on a flat surface—it automatically displays the percent slope.


Door Pressure Gauge

![Door pressure gauge. Courtesy of AccessStore.com](image)

The force required to open doors must be minimal so that they can be easily operated by those who might have limited upper body strength (such as the elderly), challenges with manual dexterity, or any other issue that might make opening heavy doors a challenge. In the past, the fish scale was the most common way to measure the force needed to open a door. Today, the door pressure gauge is a more efficient tool. To assess door pressure, simply open the door by pressing the tip of the gauge against the door. The readout on the gauge will indicate the force required to open the door. The door pressure gauge can determine if the force required to open a door is greater than that permitted.

Available: Eastlake, Derry & Associates, LLC

C. Software Tools

**CodeBuddy, Version 5.0H-98**
**CodeBuddy, Version 5.0H-98**, is an easy-to-use computer software program for finding fast and accurate answers to Disabled Access/ADA questions. CodeBuddy allows users to search across code sections, or by occupancy groups, topics, live plan, or figures, and retrieve needed information. The program contains pertinent text, graphical examples and explanations, sketches, and tables. Numerous code sections are referenced from the 1998 California Building Code Disabled Access regulations and **ADAAG**. CodeBuddy runs on a computer within the browser environment (no need for Internet connection or being online). Also, users can download the latest software upgrades via the Internet as the codes change.

**ADAAG Pro**

**ADAAG Pro** is an easy-to-use computer software program developed to assist in ADA surveys and audits. Based on the **ADAAG Checklist**, ADAAG Pro allows users to create customized—and re-use previously customized—accessibility surveys for any type of facility. The software contains the ADA law, regulations and guidelines, as well as graphic illustrations associated with the ADAAG Checklist in a searchable format. The software is updated quarterly to reflect the latest ADA.

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**Relevant Codes and Standards**

**Codes and Standards**

- [ASME A18.1-2003 Safety Standard for Platform Lifts and Stairway Chairlifts](#)
- [International Building Code](#)
- [NFPA 72 National Fire Alarm Code, 2002 Edition](#)
- [Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS)](#)

**Laws and Regulations**

- [Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)](#)
- [Architectural Barriers Act (ABA)](#)
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, [Section 504, Section 508](#)

**Guidelines**

- [Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)](#) ADA

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Additional Resources

The major resource for guidance on accessible design is the U.S. Access Board (Access Board). The Access Board is an independent federal agency devoted to accessibility for people with disabilities. Key responsibilities of the Board include developing and maintaining accessibility guidelines and standards for the built environment, transit vehicles, telecommunications equipment, and electronic and information technology; providing technical assistance and training for these guidelines and standards; and enforcing accessibility standards for federally funded facilities. For more resources, see Access Board’s Links Page.

WBDG

Building / Space Types

Applicable to most building types and space types, especially Courthouses and Courtrooms

Design Objectives


Products and Systems

Building Envelope Design Guide: Exterior Doors
Federal Green Construction Guide for Specifiers:

- 01 91 00 (01810) Commissioning
- 08 14 00 (08210) Wood Doors
- 14 20 00 (14200) Elevators
- 22 40 00 (15400) Plumbing Fixtures

Project Management

Building Commissioning