

Page Heading: What is an access doc?

“access documents are used by rock stars and divas all the time—they’re simply called riders and no one bats an eye. this is because they are helpful for everyone involved: the person can say what they need in order to do their thing, and the venue/institution knows exactly how to provide support for them to do their thing.”

— Johanna Hedva

An access doc, or access ‘rider’ is a document that outlines your disability access needs. You might make one so that you can give it to galleries/institutions/organisations when you start working with them on a project, such as a gallery you’re doing a show at for example, to let them know what you need them to facilitate to make sure you have equal access to work.

You might want to make one if you are an artist or art worker and identify as sick/crip/disabled and have found that you have encountered barriers in your working relationships or ability to take on opportunities because of your disability.

We’ve made everything here from our own positions as disabled artists and writers, but we hope this site might be useful for other kinds of art workers too.

Guide to making an access doc

The ones we've seen and made for ourselves have generally been a text document with bullet points, but you can do whatever's best for you, bearing in mind it needs to be clear.

Some questions you might want to ask yourself when writing the doc are:

- What access barriers have I encountered in the past and how could these have been navigated?
- What would stop me from being able to do the project at all? How can I be facilitated?
- What situations do I expect to be in during an upcoming project, and what barriers might I encounter there?
- What about being around during an install? Speaking at an event? How can my access needs in those instances be facilitated?
- Would it be helpful to add 'This is negotiable' or 'This is non-negotiable' next to any individual points?

You don't have to explain why you need each thing. You should feel empowered, not exposed by this. For example, if you know you'll need to be able to get to a toilet quickly at all times, you can just say that, and don't have to explain that it's because you have IBS.

Using your access doc

The point at which you introduce the organisation you're working with to your access doc will probably depend on your access needs, the specific project you're working on, and your personal preference. Again, you shouldn't feel exposed by sharing the document with someone you're working with, so you don't have to share it as soon as you've made contact (unless you want to). You might want to think about whether the opportunity being offered will be possible without your access needs being met, and if not it would probably be best to introduce it sooner rather than later so you're not wasting your time and energy on something that won't come into fruition. You might also want to think about what stage in your working relationship with the organisation will your access needs come into play. Will responding to emails take longer? Will

attending a site visit mean specific accommodation? The earlier you introduce your doc the more possible it is for planning to happen around your needs. One option could be to make it clear that you have an access doc earlier in the conversation, and then sending it when it's relevant.

You might also want to think about how private you want the doc to be. Are you happy for it to be shared with all staff at the organisation? Just the curator/your main contact? What about technicians?

It might make sense to make an access needs conversation separate from other conversations, so if this is happening by email, then start a new thread. This can help keep communication clear and make sure your access needs aren't missed. You might even want to write in the email you attach your doc to that you need acknowledgement of receipt of the doc, and confirmation that it's been read and agreed with.

We've written the template with numbered headings and lettered subheadings because this can make it easier for you to discuss individual points with the people you're working with.

Title

e.g. **Disability Access Needs**

Intro sentence or two

You can mention what your disability is here if you want to, but you don't have to.

e.g. I am disabled and have the following access needs. Please let me know if you need further clarification on any of the below points.

Your needs

You might want to break these down into sections like the example below

E.g.

Travel

- Need A
- Need B

Installs

- Need A
- Need B

Events

- Need A
- Need B

Supporting Information

You might want to include a link to spoon theory or the social model of disability, or write a quick explanation of any other supporting information if it's relevant to you and you think it would help.