

ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE FOR PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

KEY REQUIREMENTS + UNIVERSAL DESIGN

§ numbers refer to both ADA-2010 & A117.1-2017, unless otherwise noted. See Resources on Page 2.

1. Provide accessible routes (that coincide with the general circulation path) to entrances and all playing fields, courts, playgrounds, and other recreation areas, from accessible parking, passenger loading, and public rights-of-way (ADA§206.2).

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Separate vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian routes (curbs, bollards, furniture, planting strips, etc.), and mark with distinct paving materials. Provide markings for traffic in opposing directions.

2. Provide surfaces that are stable, firm, and slip-resistant (§302.1).
3. Provide a smooth route with level changes limited to 1/4 in. if abrupt, or 1/2 in. if the top 1/4 in. is beveled at a slope of 1:2 max. (§303).
4. Provide a 36 in. wide min. route with a min. 60 in. by 64 in. passing space every 200 ft. The min. width increases at turns (§403.5).

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Provide a min. width of 60-72 in. throughout **ALL** paths/trails.

5. Provide a slope of 1:20 (5%) max. unless a ramp with a 1:12 (8.3%) max. slope is used. The cross slope is 1:48 (2.08%) max. (§403, §405). Hiking trails on steep terrain are often exempted if infeasible.

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On exempted trails, limit slopes to 1:10 and provide level resting areas (60 in. length) as follows:

- If slope is 1:20 – 1:12 (5% - 8.3%), provide at least every 50 ft.
- If slope is 1:12 – 1:10 (8.3% - 10%), provide at least every 30 ft.

6. Ensure gates to enclosed areas are accessible (§404).

7. Ensure activity areas and shelters are at grade or can be accessed by ramp (§405). Provide openings at any curbs or enclosures.
8. Ensure 5% of tables in each area are accessible: 34 in. max. height, and knee/toe clearance at least 30 in. wide and 17 in. deep (§902).

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Ensure **ALL** tables are accessible.

9. Provide International Symbol of Accessibility and directional signs to indicate nearest accessible entrances and accessible routes (ADA§216.6).

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- Provide strategically placed landmarks (such as gateway arches) to highlight areas of interest, site access points, and scenic views.
- Provide a prominent, illuminated sign visible from the direction of approach at all entrances to the site, buildings, and amenities.

10. Where signs are provided to identify permanent rooms and spaces, or for directional information, they must be accessible (ADA§216.2).

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- Provide names to all roads, paths, and trails.
- Provide directional signage at all intersections.
- Provide maps and tactile models noting primary destinations.
- Provide tactile guide strips leading to primary destinations.
- Consider electronic guidance systems (e.g., app-based guidance).

Disclaimer: This guide highlights key accessibility requirements only. It is not intended as a comprehensive substitute for applicable laws, regulations, or codes. Refer to such applicable requirements for details. Resources are for informational purposes only. The IDEA Center does not endorse any products, services, or opinions therein.

11. Key components of accessible signs include:

- Characters must have conventional form, not be italic, oblique, script, highly decorative, or unusual (ADA§703.2.3).
- Characters must be light on dark or dark on light (ADA§703.5.1). There are free color contrast checking tools available on-line.
- Characters must be a non-glare finish (ADA§703.5.1).
- Refer to §703.2 for additional requirements on width of characters, stroke lines, character spacing, line spacing, and min. letter height based on viewing distance.
- Provide raised characters and Braille on signs identifying permanent rooms and spaces (ADA§703.2, ADA§703.3).

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- Provide signs that use high-contrast colors, are readable from the expected viewing distance, and unobstructed.
- Use pictograms (complying with ADA§703.5 where applicable).
- Provide information in more than one language.
- Provide Braille and raised lettering on **ALL** signs within reach.



This table provides knee/toe clearance and clear floor space outside the circulation route.



Interactive areas like this garden bed can be raised with a forward approach and knee/toe clearance.



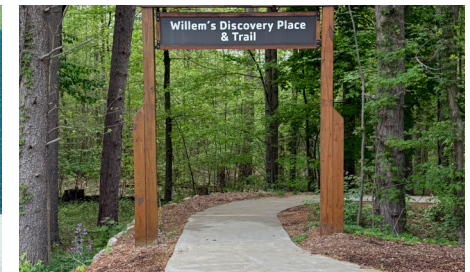
Small compacted crushed rock (left) and concrete (right) are both good surfaces with proper ground prep.



This directional sign is high-contrast, indicates trail length, and the outlined arrows are easy to see.



This tactile map has Braille and color-coding to simplify wayfinding.



This sign and gateway arch clearly identify the correct route.

RESOURCES

Universal Design - Books

- Inclusive Design: Implementation and Evaluation (2017)
- Universal Design: Creating Inclusive Environments (2012)

Universal Design - Websites

- IDEA Center: idea.ap.buffalo.edu
- Innovative Solutions for Universal Design: thisisUD.com
- Landscape Architects: asla.org/universalsparksandplazas.aspx

Accessibility

- A117.1 Standard: webstore.ansi.org/standards/icc/ICCA1172017
- ADA Standards: access-board.gov/ada/
- ABA Guide: access-board.gov/files/aba/guides/outdoor-guide.pdf
- ADA Checklists: adachecklist.org/checklist.html
- Forest Service: fs.usda.gov/managing-land/national-forests-grasslands/accessibility/resources
- Training Video: accessibilityonline.org/arts-n-rec/archives/110978
- Training Video: accessibilityonline.org/arts-n-rec/archives/110972