

## *Kitchen*

Another difficult room to design (or redesign) is the kitchen. Thought needs to be given as to the amount of independence that is desired. A standard kitchen may be adequate for a "snacker," yet, for the individual who is cooking and cleaning, special accommodations should be made.

Countertops and the stovetops should be 34 inches high with a 30-inch knee clearance underneath. An island-type food preparation area may be best because it allows accessibility from all sides and is convenient for either right- or left-handed individuals.

## *Switches and outlets*

Mount electrical outlets at least 21 inches above the floor. Light and appliance switches should be mounted no more than 48 inches above the floor.

## *Safety*

Safety should always be considered when building or remodeling a home, especially for the disabled. Guard against burns where hot water pipes might be exposed. Install anti-scald features in tubs and showers and sinks for those insensitive to temperature. If a child is using a wheelchair, install a fence or gate in front of any stairway. Probably the most

overlooked safety feature in a home for someone using a wheelchair or walker is a secondary exit in case of fire.

It is wise to get suggestions for specific equipment needs from an occupational therapist, especially one who has worked closely with the individual for whom the home is being modified or built.

Always consult your building professional for specifications and building code, which may vary from city to city. Work as closely and as often as possible with your builder to let them know what is most convenient and necessary for you.

These are some good suggestions to get you started thinking about what you can do to make your home more "user friendly" in case of a disability. Remember, it is always easier to do it right the first time and more costly to remodel.

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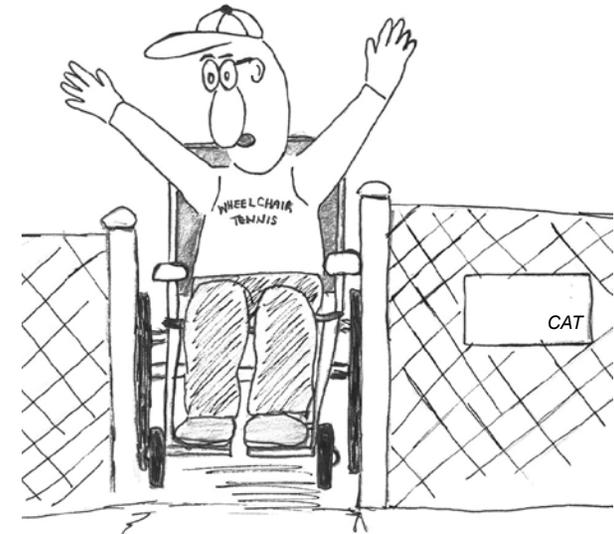


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# MAKING YOUR HOME USER FRIENDLY



## *Making your Home Accessible*

Whether a person is born with a disability or becomes disabled later in life, one thing you can count on is "barriers." Stairs, curbs, narrow doorways and hallways, just to name a few, become major obstacles to those who use walkers or wheelchairs.

This brochure, though not exhaustive, will give a variety of helpful hints in a variety of areas to assist in making your home more "user friendly" to an individual using a walker or wheelchair. Remember, no two disabilities are alike - what seems accessible to one may be complete frustration for another. Try to be sensitive to individual needs.

### *Getting into the home*

Before we do any modification to the interior of the home, let's make sure we can get to and through the door.



Unless your home is built on a concrete slab, it is almost certain to have steps leading to the door.

Therefore, ramping is necessary. The best and easiest formula to remember for the grade

(incline) of the ramp is "1 foot long for every inch in height." Therefore, if the distance from the ground to the threshold of the door is 8 inches, the ramp should be 8 feet long.

### *Doorways and Hallways*

A 30-inch doorway will accommodate the majority of wheelchairs. Just to be on the safe side, install 36-inch doors whenever and wherever possible.

Hallways should be at least 40 inches wide. This not only makes it easy to get through doorways without busting knuckles, it allows for making that 90 degree turn into the bedroom and bathroom much easier.



An added bonus to 36-inch doorways and hallways is that it makes moving furniture in and out of the house much easier!

### *Bedrooms*

Bedrooms need adequate room for mobility. Allow 36 inches between the bed and walls and furniture. Forty-eight inches at the foot of the bed allows plenty of room for those 90-degree turns.

### *Closets*

A closet with adjustable shelving is best - allowing both the wheelchair user and the able-bodied individual to make best use of the available space. "Walk-in" closets would also be advantageous.

### *Bathrooms*

The bathroom is probably the most difficult room to design and positively the most difficult to remodel for the wheelchair user. The plumbing is already in place in walls and under crawlspaces. Bathrooms are notorious for having narrow doors and being the smallest room in the house.

The average wheelchair needs a 60-inch open area to turn 360 degrees. Countertops, including sinks, should be no more than 34 inches high. There should be a 30-inch clearance under the sink to allow the wheelchair user knee clearance. Make sure hot water pipes are either in the wall or insulated to protect from burns.

Commodes, bathtubs and showers are all an individual preference. The ideal bathing facility is a "roll-in" shower. Make sure to have ample grab bars around the bathing area and commode.