

Museum Accessibility Guide

Making museums accessible for children with special educational or accessibility needs

Preparations at Home

Preparing your child at home before visiting a museum is extremely beneficial. Simple tactics for easing anxieties about interacting in new environments include creating social stories, packing a quiet bag with security items from home, introducing your child to exhibit materials through at-home lessons, preparing a picture schedule of the museum visit, employing some extra help, and bringing favorite snacks.

Preparations with the Museum

Parking & Entrance

Ask the museum about what they offer for handicap parking, accessible entrances (maybe even a back-door entry that may be easier to access than a front entry), special drop-off or check-in locations, and early entry times to accommodate those with special needs.

Food

Because museums have varying food policies, it is best to ask ahead of time if outside food is allowed in all areas of the building, in limited locations, or only off-site. You also might ask if the museum has a restaurant or knows of any restaurants in the area that cater to specific food sensitivities.

Navigation

Confidence in navigating a new museum is extremely important when a child may need to access specific spaces quickly. Therefore, take steps ahead of time to build your familiarity with this unfamiliar space. Many museums have downloadable maps or online virtual tours, and may even be willing to send you specific images you can use to create a customized schedule and map for your student's visit to the museum.

Spaces

Museums typically offer their visitors a variety of different environments, which you can use to your advantage. Specific areas may have loud noises, bright lights, accessibility limitations, hands-on/hands-off exhibits, eating areas, strong smells, quiet zones, or darkened and more soothing areas. Knowing where all these spaces are in the museum, along with the natural daily rhythms of your child, is not only helpful in planning your visit but also will ensure that it's more successful.

Educational Material

Many museums create educational and teacher materials to accompany their various exhibits. As a home educator, you can ask for copies of these materials as well. They can be valuable in preparing your student before the museum visit, having materials to reference during the visit, and building upon the museum learning experiences in the days and weeks after the visit.



Tours

It's always very helpful to have a guide! Some museums offer you an automated guide in the form of an audio tour or a museum app, while others have volunteers or docents available who provide tours to guests as a museum courtesy. Ask ahead of time if these options are available, what days/hours the tours are given and whether or not they need to be scheduled in advance.

Admission

Cost is a big factor for families who have children with educational and accessibility needs as a one-day access fee might only be used for a few hours before a child needs to return home. To help lower the costs, ask the museum if it has discounted tickets, free admission days, multi-day passes, family seasonal passes, or annual passes with reciprocal agreements with other museums.

Special Considerations

The final thing you should do when talking with a museum representative is to let them know about the specific needs of your child. The more you are willing to educate others about what you and your family need, the more willing and able individuals and organizations will be to help you reach the goals you have for your child. Any need that would help your child better access the museum environment is a reasonable request.

Have fun and don't forget to download the companion checklist!

Enjoy your visit and please let us know if there is anything else we can do to help make museums more accessible to your homeschooling efforts.

- [International Association for Creation](#)
- [SPED Homeschool](#)

Download the companion checklist to this guide with [this link](#).

