

Technical Bulletin: Understanding the ADA and Implications for Office Design

What is the ADA?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law enacted in 1990. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of any place of public accommodation.

When is a person considered to have a disability?

With respect to an individual, the term “disability” means a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

What does “full and equal enjoyment” mean?

Full and equal enjoyment means the right to participate and to have an equal opportunity to obtain the same results as others to the extent possible with such accommodations as may be required by the Act and its regulations.

What is a place of public accommodation?

Places of public accommodation include: places of lodging, establishments serving food or drink, places of exhibition or entertainment, public gathering places, sales or rental establishments, service establishments, stations used for specified public transportation, places of public display or collection, places of recreation, places of education, social service center establishments, places of exercise or recreation.

How does the ADA affect commercial environments that are not places of public accommodation, such as corporate offices?

The ADA prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the bases of disability. It requires reasonable accommodations to the known physical or mental limitations of disabled employees. This includes accessibility to the things, such as furnishings, that employees need to perform their work.

Does the ADA make specific requirements for the accessibility of office furniture?

That ADA does not cover office furniture per se, and there are no regulations for determining whether furnishings are considered “accessible.” Therefore, terms such as “ADA compliant” or “conforms to ADA requirements” are not verifiable claims for office furniture.

What may I do so my offices and its furnishings make “reasonable accommodations” to the limitations of disabled employees?

National supports the industry’s move toward principles of “accessible” or “universal” design. This approach emphasizes making the products and environments usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation or specialized design.

How can I choose furnishings that conform to the principles of accessible design?

Although there are no official specifications, National recommends you consider the following guidelines when choosing furniture for environments with accessible design.

1. Choose desks, tables and counters that allow adjustment for height and angle of worksurfaces.
2. Surface materials can affect users. For example, glossy, highly reflective surfaces may cause a glare that makes tasks more difficult for the visually impaired.
3. Worksurfaces no deeper than 38" can keep items accessible for people with limited reach.
4. Knee wells at least 30" wide and 19" deep will provide adequate room for most users in wheelchairs.
5. Consider the advantages of modular casegoods for their flexibility in creating open and accessible workspaces.
6. Open storage units are more accessible than closed ones; side-hinged doors offer advantages over doors that must be raised or lowered.
7. Cabinets with U-shaped pulls and/or push latches enable access for people with manual limitations.
8. Moveable cabinets can enhance the ease of access for people with limited mobility.
9. Chairs should be adjustable for the individual’s comfort, enable different postures for various tasks, and allow the user to sit with both feet flat on the floor.
10. Seating features that help people with arthritis or other mobility limitations include firm padding, longer arm rests with large grip areas, and a base large enough to let the user place his or her feet directly beneath themselves when rising.

Where can I get more information about accessible design?

More is being developed on this subject all the time. Two excellent online resources are: Adaptive Environments (www.adaptenv.org) and the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina University (www.design.ncsu.edu/cud).

ADA Guidelines for Office Furniture American and Usable Facilities 2003-ICC/ANSI A117.1-2003

304.3.1 Circular Space. The turning space shall be a circular space with a 60 inch minimum diameter. The turning space shall be permitted to include knee and toe clearance complying with Section 306.

306.3 Knee Clearance

306.3.1 General

Space beneath an element between 9 inches and 27 inches above the floor shall be considered knee clearance and shall comply with Section 306.3.

306.3.2 Maximum Depth

Knee clearance shall be permitted to extend 25 inches maximum under an element 9 inches above the floor.

306.3.5 Width

Knee clearance shall be 30 inches minimum in width.

307.2 Protrusion Limits.

Objects with leading edges more than 27 inches and not more than 80 inches above the floor shall protrude 4 inches maximum horizontally into the circulation path.

308.2 Forward Reach

308.2.1 Unobstructed

Where a forward reach is unobstructed, the high forward reach shall be 48 inches maximum and the low forward reach shall be 15 inches minimum above the floor.

308.2 Forward Reach

308.2.2 Obstructed High Reach

Where a high forward reach is over an obstruction, the clear floor shall extend beneath the element for a distance not less than the required reach depth over the obstruction.

The high forward reach shall be 48 inches maximum where

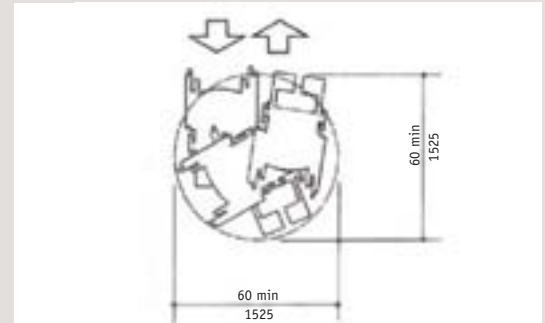


Fig. 304.3.1 Circular Space

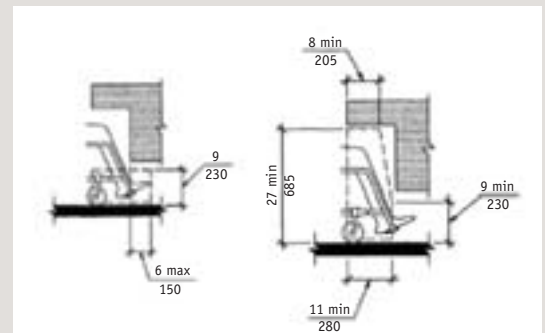


Fig. 306.3 Knee Clearance

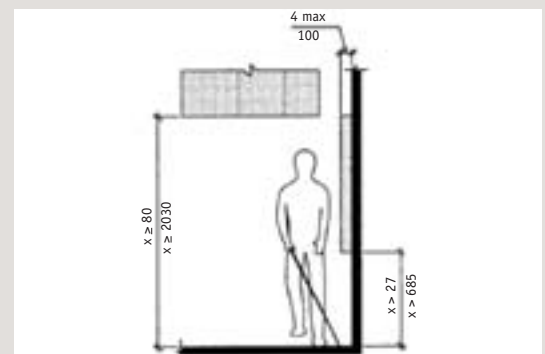


Fig. 307.2 Protrusion Limits

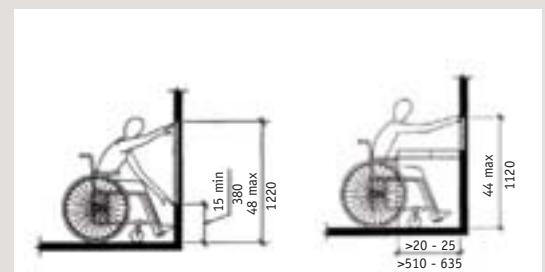


Fig. 308.2.1 Unobstructed Forward Reach

Fig. 308.2.2 Obstructed High Forward Reach

308.2.2 Obstructed High Reach (Continued)

the reach depth is 20 inches maximum. Where the reach depth exceeds 20 inches, the high forward reach shall be 44 inches maximum, and the reach depth shall be 25 inches maximum.

308.3 Side Reach

308.3.1 Unobstructed

Where a clear floor space allows a parallel approach to an element and the side reach is unobstructed, the high side reach shall be 48 inches maximum and the low side reach shall be 15 inches minimum above the floor.

308.3.2 Obstructed High Reach

Where a clear floor space allows a parallel approach to an object and the high side reach is over an obstruction, the height of the obstruction shall be 34 inches maximum and the depth of the obstruction shall be 24 inches maximum. The high side reach shall be 48 inches maximum for a reach depth of 10 inches maximum. Where the reach depth exceeds 10 inches, the high side reach shall be 46 inches maximum for a reach depth of 24 inches maximum.

309.4 Operation

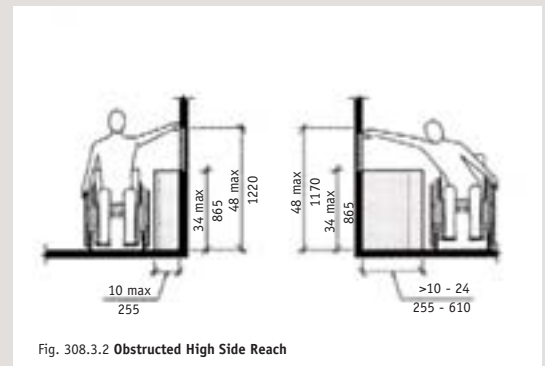
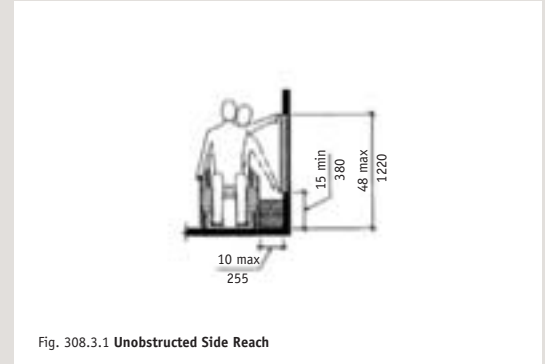
Operable parts shall be operable with one hand and shall not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting the wrist. The force required to activate operable parts shall be 5.0 pounds maximum.

904.3.1 Parallel Approach

A portion of the counter surface 36 inches minimum in length and 36 inches maximum in height above the floor shall be provided. Where the counter surface is less than 36 inches in length, the entire counter surface shall be 36 inches maximum in height above the floor. A clear floor space complying with Section 305, positioned for a parallel approach adjacent to the accessible counter, shall be provided.

904.3.2 Forward Approach

A portion of the counter surface 30 inches minimum in length and 36 inches maximum in height above the floor shall be provided. A clear floor space complying with Section 305, positioned for a forward approach to the accessible counter, shall be provided. Knee and toe clearance complying with Section 306 shall be provided under the accessible counter.



Barrington® Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 50" return without center drawer.
- 72" kneespace credenza meets all requirements.
- Due to the center drawer being installed on desk units, the minimum height clearance is not met.
- Traditional boat shaped tables do not meet knee clearance due to the apron rail.

Franklin™ Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- 72" kneespace credenza meet all requirements.
- Due to the center drawer being installed on desk units, the minimum height clearance is not met.
- Traditional boat shaped tables do not meet knee clearance due to the apron rail.

Captivate® Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 73" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 53" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 73" Fin-shaped desk and a 24" x 53" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 73" credenza and a 24" x 53" return without center drawer.
- 72" kneespace credenzas meet all requirements.
- 43" and 49" square table tops with base as well as 8', 10', 12', 14', and 16' conference tables meet all requirements.

Escalade® Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 73" P-shaped or U-shaped desk and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- 72" kneespace credenzas meet all requirements.
- 48" round table top with base as well as 8', 10', 12', 14', and 16' conference tables meet all requirements.

Hiland™ Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" U-shaped, P-shaped or Keyhole desk (without modesty) and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- 66" and 72" double pedestal desks meet all requirements.
- 72" kneespace credenza meets all requirements.
- 42" and 48" round table tops with base meet all requirements.

Clever® Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 44" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" U-shaped desk (without modesty) and a 24" x 44" return without center drawer.
- 66" and 72" kneespace credenzas meet all requirements.
- 42" round table top with base meet all requirements.

Lauderdale® Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" Fin-shaped desk (without modesty) and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- 66" and 72" double pedestal desks meet all requirements.
- 72" kneespace credenza meets all requirements.
- 42" and 48" round table tops with base meet all requirements.

Casbah™ Casegoods

- Due to the recessed façade worksurface detail, Casbah casegoods do not meet knee clearance guidelines.

Arrowood™ Veneer Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 50" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 50" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" U-shaped desk (without modesty) and a 24" x 50" return without center drawer.
- 72" kneespace credenza meets all requirements.
- 42" and 48" round table tops with base meet all requirements.

Arrowood™ Laminate Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" U-shaped desk (without modesty) and a 24" x 50" return without center drawer.
- 72" kneespace credenza meets all requirements.

Entice® Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" U-shaped desk (without modesty) and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- 66" and 72" desks meet all requirements.
- 66" and 72" kneespace credenzas meet all requirements.

EnvyWorks® Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 48" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" U-shaped or P-shaped desk (without modesty) and a 24" x 50" return without center drawer.
- 72" kneespace credenza meets all requirements.
- All shell based units are accessible without pedestals. For pedestal configurations in shell based units, use guidelines above.

WaveWorks® Assembled Casegoods

- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" single pedestal desk and a 24" x 48" or 24" x 60" return without center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 24" x 72" credenza and a 24" x 48" or 24" x 60" return without a center drawer.
- An accessible L-unit can be configured using a 36" x 72" U-shaped or P-shaped desk (without modesty) and a 24" x 48" or 24" x 60" return without center drawer.
- An accessible U-station can be configured using a 60" bridge.
- 66" and 72" desks meet all requirements.
- 66" and 72" kneespace credenzas meet all requirements.
- ADA accessible reception units are available.

WaveWorks® Component Casegoods

- Review guidelines above for recommendations.

WaveWorks® Tables

- Review guidelines above for recommendations.

WaveWorks® Metal

- Review guidelines above for recommendations.

National Conference Tables

- Minimum 42" width or diameter.
- Refer to guidelines above for knee clearance when selecting base options (all National bases meet ADA requirements).