



# The Basics of Universal Design

## Information sheet

Universal Design promotes an inclusive society by providing simple design solutions that accommodate everybody's needs. Accessible Design, while providing people with disabilities the right to access, does not go far enough because it does not express social integration.


Life expectancy is rising and modern medicine has increased the survival rate of those with significant injuries, illnesses and congenital conditions. Universal Design acknowledges disability, aging and other differences as part of everyday life.

There are strong economic advantages for promoting a Universal Design environment. As people with disabilities have become integrated into general community life, hold jobs and earn money their purchasing power has increased significantly. In the United States, consumers over 65 have the highest discretionary income and the trend is also evidenced in other countries. Over 50% of older people have a recognised disability.

Access barriers that restrict people with disabilities can also adversely affect a wide range of people e.g. people pushing baby buggies, shopping trolleys, large suitcases, luggage, etc.

### **Some features of Universal Design include:**

- No-step entry, including door thresholds level with the floor
- One-storey living
- Wide doorways and hallways
- Extra floor space

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- Non-slip surfaces
  - Good lighting throughout
  - Large-print forms for all
  - Websites accessible for users with a variety of disabilities
  - Spaces equipped with induction loops for hearing aid users
  - Using simple English in publications and other communication

## Principles of Universal Design

In 1997, the Center for Universal Design gathered a working group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researchers, who collaborated to define the seven main principles of Universal Design.

### 1. Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

### 2. Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

### 3. Simple and Intuitive Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

### 4. Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.



## **5. Tolerance for Error**

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

## **6. Low Physical Effort**

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

## **7. Size and Space for Approach and Use**

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

More detailed information and examples of these principles can be found online at:

[http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about\\_ud/udprinciples.htm](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/udprinciples.htm)

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