

Accessibility and the Great Outdoors Factsheet 1

Carrying out a Self-Assessment Audit

This factsheet has been developed to support application of the Self Assessment Checklist provided with the guidance document 'Great Outdoors, A guide for Accessibility'. Undertaking a self-assessment audit is the first step in assessing your outdoor amenity / facility prior to compiling an Access Improvement Plan in collaboration with stakeholder groups. This factsheet will outline a methodology for auditing using checklist and should be read in conjunction with the **Accessibility and the Great Outdoors Factsheet 2 – Self Assessment Audit Tools and Techniques**



Use of the Self Assessment Checklist

The checklist is designed to give you a start point for accessibility planning. It gives you an objective record of the current accessibility status of the site and will help you record the nature of the routes, features and facilities.

This can assist in both planning for maintenance, improvements and in advertising the accessibility of your site to visitors.

Before undertaking your audit it would be useful to

- Review the guidance document 'Great Outdoors a Guide for Accessibility'
- Download the Self Assessment Checklist from the Cara website.

Basic Equipment Required

(Refer to Factsheet 2 for more information)

- A clipboard
- A printed copy of the Self Assessment Checklist
- A 5 meter measuring tape
- An Inclinometer

 Approach

- **Weather:** Choose a day that will provide fair conditions for your assessment, it may be too challenging if the weather is very wet and very windy. It can be beneficial to audit after adverse weather when the condition of the environment is more challenging, but a fair day in any season will be suitable to identify the general accessibility status of your site / amenity.
- **Checklist:** Identify the audit checklist that is most suited to the environment to be audited – Trails, Beaches, or Waterways.
- **Commencement:** Begin your audit at the entrance to your site and follow the ‘route of travel’ of visitors.. If your site is accessible by vehicle, the start point is the parking area (accessible parking space if provided). If your site does not have an accessible parking space, begin where this could be provided or at a set-down area. Accessible parking should be provided within 25m of the site entrance (entrance building if applicable).
- **Route Record:** Make record of the route being audited using a map or referencing a known route name.
- **Parking:** Record the nature and layout of any accessible parking. Measure the accessible spaces provided.
- **Distance to Entrance:** identify the distance from the parking / set down point to the site entrance or entrance building. (Good practice references this should ideally be less than 25m)

- **Along the route of travel:**

Note obstructions, width at narrow points.

Note gradients. Note where the steepest gradients occur and their length

Note the finish of varying route surfaces and their approximate lengths

Take lots of photos along the route. It can be useful to upload the photos on location to a trails app for your record.

- **Having regard to the slope and surface of the routes**, identify if trails / boardwalks can be described as ‘Multi Access’ or ‘Challenging Access’. If not, is there a trail that would lend itself to improvements that will enable it to be listed in this way?

- **Having regard to the guidance document, review signage and way-finding on site.** Is signage adequate and what are the ways it can be improved?
- **Having regard to the guidance document, review picnic areas.** Note the relative accessibility and layout of picnic tables. Check ground surfaces, access widths, layout and table design. If a picnic area is not provided, where might one be suitably located?
- **Having regard to the guidance document, review playground areas.** Note the relative accessibility of and layout of the playground. How accessible is the area and can it be improved? If there is no playground, would this site lend itself to a play area and if so where?
- **Having reference to the guidance document, review other amenities relevant to the environment in question,** such as fishing stands, waterways access, boardwalks as appropriate. In each situation, note any barriers to access or suggested improvements.
- **Having regard to the guidance, review the accessibility of toilets / changing facilities at the location.** Record what is provided, and note any suggested improvements.
- **Post Audit:** It is possible to record the information you have gathered into the Online Self Assessment Checklist tool available on the Cara Website.

! Top Tips

Take notes objectively, the checklist is not a judgment tool. Not every site can be made accessible to everyone. The audit is a screening exercise, not a problem solving one. Work through audit systematically without over-thinking the items raised. These can be reflected on further later using your data gathered and photos taken.

Observe while you go:

What are the possibilities for improving access at this location?

What improvements to accessibility does this environment, the vegetation / plant life, its natural topography and layout, lend itself to, in terms of improved experience for a range of different user needs.

These observations will be informative in planning accessibility improvements.



Next Steps

Access Improvement Plan: Having documented the information gathered, an Access Improvement Plan can be compiled with the input of a multidisciplinary team. It is important to build in a consultation process with a range of end users including representatives from the disability community. This plan can identify and action short, medium and long term improvements informed by the accessibility audit. *Refer to Section 2 of Great Outdoors, A Guide for Accessibility.*

Staff Training: Disability Awareness Training of staff will greatly help improve visitor experience. *Refer to Section 2 of Great Outdoors, A Guide for Accessibility.*

Information & Communication: One of the simplest improvements to the accessibility of an outdoor amenity is to advertise its characteristics in your promotional literature and on your website, via descriptions including images and video where appropriate, to inform visitors on what to expect. This helps visitors plan for their visit. Effective way-finding on site *Refer to Section 3 of Great Outdoors, A Guide for Accessibility.*



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