



# Creating your own access rider

A guide to creating an access  
statement or document

**UNLIMITED**

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# What is an access rider?

An access rider is also called an access document or access statement. It's a comprehensive document outlining your access needs. An access rider might also take alternative formats, like video or audio.

## How powerful is an access rider?

Under the 2010 Equality Act, as a disabled person, an employer has a legal obligation to make 'reasonable adjustments' to support you at work. As a freelancer, or self-employed person, this includes anyone who is contracting you to provide a service.

While an access rider itself isn't legally binding, it can be a useful tool when sharing your needs with an organisation. Some things contained within it may be considered reasonable adjustment, for example hybrid or flexible working for someone with an energy-limiting condition.

What makes access riders powerful is that they open up a bigger discussion about disability and accessibility – particularly if everyone is using them as standard practice.

[Find out more about reasonable adjustments and your legal rights here.](#)

## So why use an access rider?

23% of people in the UK identify as disabled, which rises to 36% if you include those who have a long-term health condition. Yet this only translates to 7% of staff who work in the arts identifying as disabled.

As well as helping you get your needs met, a rider can have other benefits:

- It reduces the number of times you have to explain your needs, requirements and/or disability.
- It allows you to think carefully about how much information you wish to share with people, in advance of being asked.
- It allows you to be consistent with your requests.
- It signals to others that you're thinking about accessibility.
- It allows employers/collaborators to feel more confident in supporting you, meaning you're more likely to get the support you need.

How someone receives an access rider might give you an idea of how accommodating they will be. It might also open up a discussion about their needs, or the needs of others working on a project.

## Who can make an access rider?

Anyone can make an access rider, not just if you work as an artist.

You can make one for anyone that you have a working relationship with, that you feel could benefit from knowing your access needs.

You might be a freelance or self-employed cultural worker or working as an employee within an organisation.

Later in this resource you'll find some more examples of who might use an access rider, and in what context.



# How do I use an access rider?

## What stage should I send it?

You can send an access rider to someone at any stage.

For some people, sending in their access document earlier allows them to work out whether their working relationship will be supportive.

Introducing your rider earlier gives more time for arrangements to be made – for example, if you need a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to be booked. It can be useful to share a rider during the planning or fundraising phase of a project for the same reason. Introducing a rider at this stage allows for more accurate costing of access support and gives time to secure finance or fundraise to cover the cost.

You might also choose to let someone know you have a document earlier and then send it in later when it becomes relevant for you.

Other times you might send in your rider:

- As part of a contracting process
- Once you've been contracted or formally accepted a role (this might feel safer for people who are worried about discrimination)
- If your needs have changed, or you're facing additional or different barriers
- If the project parameters or your role changes
- If your needs are not being met
- If you've just learnt what a rider is!

Sending your access rider is the start of a conversation about your access needs, not the end. It's an ongoing conversation that should extend throughout the project/work.

## How much information should I include?

Your document can be as long or short as you like, and you can split it up into different sections. It can be useful to use a 'cover section' or 'front page' detailing a summary or introduction and then go into more detail in the rest of the rider. Structuring your rider clearly, using different sections for different situations can be useful. e.g. video calls, or exhibition installation.

You also don't need to write extensive justifications for each thing, just a short summary is okay. You'll find some examples later on in this resource.

Some people might send over their full version each time or just copy and paste sections that seem most relevant. For example, if you're doing a small piece of one-off work and your full document doesn't feel necessary, you might just send a couple of lines from your rider.

## Linking to other resources

To save you explaining your condition which can be taxing, you can include links to relevant resources. You can also include links to any theories that you use such as **the Social Model** or **Spoon Theory**.

## Permissions and sharing

Sending over an access rider can feel scary, as you might be sharing information that feels very personal or information you aren't used to sharing. First, think carefully about whether you need to share the whole document, or if you can just share the parts of it most relevant to the situation.

Another thing you can do is check with the organisation that they're storing it safely and securely. You might also ask them to delete it after working with you.

It's a great idea to set permissions on your document itself. You might name specific people you're happy for it to be shared with, or use a general disclaimer, like:

- You have my permission to share this document internally with technicians, colleagues and anyone I'll be working directly with.
- Please think carefully if it is necessary before sharing this document, as it contains personal information.
- Please do not share this document without my permission.

## Some examples of people using access riders in different scenarios

### 1. Frankie has been asked to run a one-off Zoom workshop that lasts two hours.

She sends over a short list of her access needs for this specific context, that she copies and pastes directly from her access document. She requires audio descriptions, a support facilitator to monitor and read out the chat, and a break halfway through the session.

**Result:** This support is provided for Frankie, and she completes the workshop.

## 2. Nat is a lead artist on a 12-month co-produced public art commission.

They send over their access document in full, at the start of the project as it will involve multiple scenarios, and it's useful for the organising team to have a detailed understanding of their needs and access requirements.

**Result:** The project lead checks in about access arrangements during the planning phase and is able to build support into the resources, budget and timeline. They continue to have follow-up conversations and check-ins throughout the project.

## 3. Jobiah has been a producer and manager at an arts organisation for eight years. He's recently had a diagnosis for ADHD, and is coming to better understand his condition, and the support he needs.

He writes himself a rider after conversations with his doctors, manager, and colleagues, and shares it with his employer.

**Result:** He has follow-up conversations with his line manager to arrange and then check in about his new support. His employer also then supports him with an Access To Work application.

## 4. Aadrika is an artist-in-residence at a museum. Despite conversations with the project lead, three months into the project, her needs are still not being met and she's finding it difficult to do her job.

Aadrika sends over an access rider for the first time. It explains in detail her needs and links to more information about her condition, the guidance on 'reasonable adjustments' and the Social Model of Disability. Previous conversations about access had been either verbal, or limited to short emails, and fairly informal.

**Result:** The project lead receives the document and offers Aadrika a meeting to check in about access. As a result of receiving the document they have a better understanding of her needs and are taking it more seriously. This starts a conversation that means Aadrika gets better support and is able to complete the residency safely.



**5. Zac, is about to receive mentoring from someone he doesn't know through a mentoring scheme. He has quite specific communication needs and also wants to ensure the support he gets is relevant.**

Zac sends over an access rider to his mentor before they meet. It expands on his communication needs and also gives details about his other needs.

**Result:** His mentor thanks him and also sends their own rider back. It turns out they are also disabled. Having Zac's full document is helpful for the mentor as they're able to offer mentoring and support that also acknowledges the barriers that Zac faces in the art world, and ways of addressing them. They're both able to develop a meaningful professional relationship that holds space for the complexity of both their needs. They both learn new things about accessibility from working with each other.

It's not always the case that sending in an access rider means that all of your needs get met. It does, however, open up a bigger discussion about access.

Here's our top tips for having better conversations about access.

## How to have conversations about access

Having conversations about access can feel challenging, but it doesn't have to be.

In an ideal world, we all get the support we ask for, but in reality, it doesn't always happen that way. Sometimes multiple conversations are needed, and negotiations between what you need, and what can be accommodated, take time. Resources within an organisation might be limited, or your access needs might clash with someone else's. Discussion, negotiation, and compromise might all need to follow, to get a result that everyone can work with.

It's important during ongoing access issues to practice self-care and self-preservation. Remember, it's ok to walk away from the conversation/s if and when you need.

Here are some other things you can do to make it easier for yourself:

- First, acknowledge that it can sometimes be a difficult conversation, particularly if your needs aren't being met, or there feels like a lack of understanding. It's perfectly normal to feel frustrated, isolated, angry, or upset.
- If someone doesn't understand access or barriers, you could gently refer them to resources about the Social Model of Disability. See the resource list at the end of this document.
- You can always request conversations. If no one is asking you about your needs, or they're going unmet, request a meeting or a conversation about it.
- It can help to bring someone with you to these meetings if you feel you need support. This could be a support worker or a trusted person.

- Similarly, having space to talk with someone trusted after difficult conversations can help.
- If you have a verbal discussion, ask for a record of what's been discussed in writing or over email, so you're all on the same page. Keeping a paper-trail of conversations is both helpful for referring back to and might be useful in future for accountability.
- Similarly, it might be also useful to keep your own notes from conversations, particularly who you spoke with, when and what you said, and any offers that were made.

Finally – and perhaps most importantly! Remember that you have legal rights as a disabled person, whether employed or freelance.



# Writing your access rider

## Before you get started

If you've never written about your access needs before, thinking about 'barriers' can be a new way of thinking. Articulating barriers can be a challenge in itself. It might feel like we're listing all the things we're 'unable to do'. Look after yourself during this process. If you're finding it hard, is there someone you can do it with? Is it something you can do with another disabled person, or for each other?

## What is a barrier?

We don't always think of things in terms of 'barriers' – it might be things that you don't like doing, things you avoid entirely, as well as things you're doing, but struggle with. Think carefully about why you avoid/don't like/struggle with certain things. What impact does it have on you? Does it impact your ability to carry out your job?

If we understand what might present barriers for us, and how it impacts us – it makes it easier to start thinking about solutions.

### Example:

**Barrier:** using public transport is challenging as I struggle with multiple overlapping sounds and being amongst lots of bodies in small spaces. As a result, I feel overwhelmed, upset, and exhausted by the time I arrive at work.

**Potential solutions:** I'm allowed to travel to work outside of peak travel times, or work from home. I use sensory aids like sunglasses, headphones or earplugs, or wearing a hood. I have a quiet space I can use at work to reset before I start the day, and colleagues let me settle in before approaching me. Through Access to Work, my employer is able to pay for me to get a taxi to work.

### Some other examples of barriers could be:

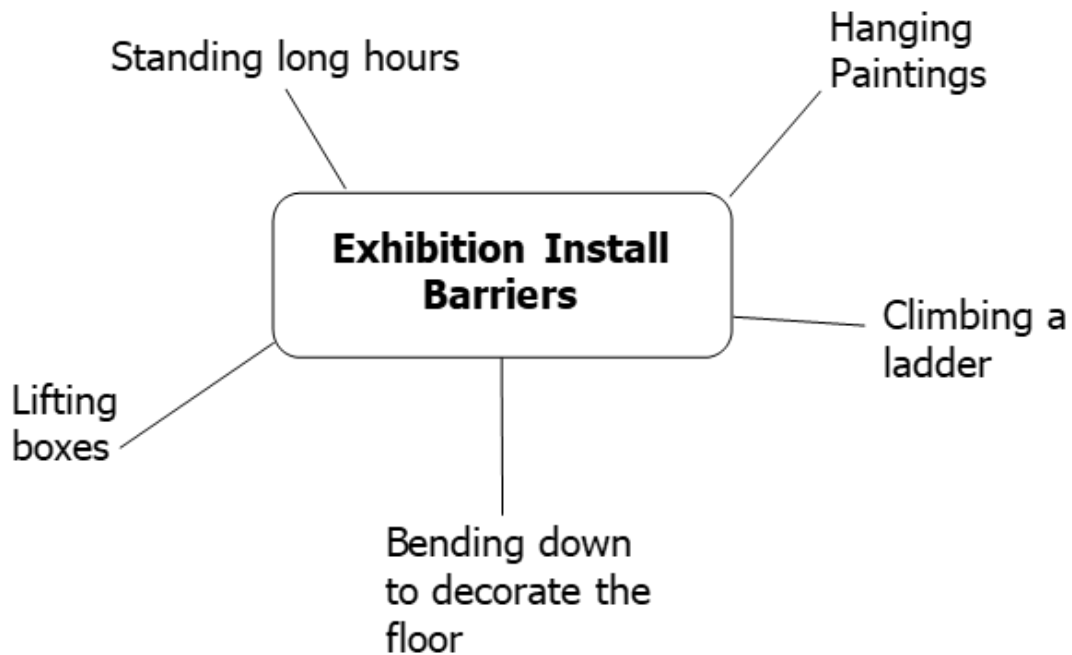
- Physical – uneven ground or walkways, people not taking COVID precautions, no step-free access.
- Sensory – poor lighting, loud environments, lots of people/bodies.
- Societal – people thinking that disabled people can't be 'real' or professional artists.
- Attitudinal – people not understanding the harm of not making access accommodations.
- Communication – people only using writing (email, text, digital documents) to communicate about work.
- Emotional barriers – being in a place that you've had bad experiences might generate feelings of distrust or distress.

Find out more about barriers, and the [Social Model of Disability here](#).

## Activity: Mind mapping

One way to start is by using a mind map exploring different scenarios where your access needs may or may not have been met. This can help you identify access needs you may not have thought about. Below is an example of a mind map with some question prompts you can use.

Image Description: a mind map with “Exhibition Install Barriers” in the middle. Arrows point to different barriers such as, lifting boxes, bending down to decorate the floor, climbing a ladder, hanging paintings and standing long hours.



For example, if you're an artist with limited mobility and you have an exhibition to install, how might the tasks involved affect you?

What access issues have you encountered in this scenario/ What might you encounter?

How did that affect your ability to carry out this task?

What change can you envisage that would have minimised the issue or helped you carry out your work?

What are some other activities or scenarios you find yourself in regularly? Using different scenarios that you might face while you're working can help you find out where you'll need help.

# Example access riders

Over the next few pages are two examples of an access riders. You're welcome to use and adapt these as you like. Remember there's no one right way to write an access document, and they come in lots of different formats.

## Example One

### Access Rider for Amina Ndlovu

I'm an artist working in performance, visual storytelling, and community arts. My work centres around themes of memory, land, and resilience. I identify as a disabled person and live with Lupus, an autoimmune condition that affects my joints, skin, and energy levels. My symptoms can vary day to day, often triggered by stress, weather (especially sun exposure), and physical overexertion. I use a walking stick on flare-up days and sometimes require a wheelchair. It is important to me that we create a working culture based on care, trust, and clear communication.

#### My Access Needs

##### Office/Planning Days

- I work best between 10am and 3pm, as I experience joint stiffness and fatigue in the early mornings and late afternoons.
- I need physically accessible spaces with ramps, accessible toilets, and seating with back support.
- Please provide all documents in both digital and large print formats.
- I appreciate meetings that are paced with pauses and space for reflection.
- Remote/hybrid options help me manage flare-ups and reduce travel fatigue.

##### Travel

- I cannot walk long distances or navigate uneven terrain. Please ensure accessible ground transport.
- I require accessible accommodation: step-free entrance, support bars in the bathroom, and a bed with a medium-soft mattress.

##### Workshops/Community Engagement

- I prefer smaller group sizes to reduce sensory strain.
- I benefit from frequent breaks and access to water and cool spaces (Lupus makes me sensitive to heat and direct sunlight).
- Written instructions and visual aids help me communicate with participants more effectively.
- I request scent-free environments as I have chemical sensitivities.

### **Emergency Information**

If I begin to feel unwell e.g., joint pain, fatigue, or dizziness, I may need to step away from the space or return home. If symptoms escalate, I might require medical attention. In the case of an emergency, please contact:

**Name:** Thandiwe Moyo

**Relationship:** Sister

**Phone:** 07503 496582

### **Supporting Information**

More about Lupus: <https://www.lupusuk.org.uk/lupus-information/>

## **Example Two**

### **Frankie's Access Rider**

**Frankie**, she/her

075034 96582 | @frankieworld

**Last updated:** June 2025

**Next review:** June 2026

**I recognise accessibility should always be an ongoing conversation.** Please continue the conversation with me after receiving and reading this access document. I'm also happy to receive access riders myself – please send yours over if helpful!

#### **Permissions**

You have my permission to share this document internally with technicians, colleagues and anyone I'll be working directly with. Please think carefully if it's necessary, before sharing this document as it contains personal information. Please don't share this document without my permission.

#### **Access Support Worker contact:**

Leo Walter | he/they | leowalter@gmail.com

I often work with the support of an Access Support Worker. It is helpful to always copy my support worker to emails addressed to me directly.

#### **Emergency contact:**

Poppie Patton | partner | 07291 029410 | poppiep@hotmail.com

## **About me**

### **Visual Description:**

(please also feel free to use this description I have provided for any audio description and alt text describing me)

I'm a mid-sized white person in my 30s, with long curly brown hair, a fringe and brown eyes.

I'm an artist, producer and facilitator, working across theatre and visual arts. I have a condition that results in chronic pain and lack of mobility in my legs and back. My condition makes physical activity challenging and tiring. Some physical activity I'm unable to do at all, or without support. Medication I take can make me sick, brain foggy, and low mood /or energy. I'm neurodivergent which can affect my energy levels, digital communication and responsiveness. Some social interactions I can find particularly tiring.

My disabilities are dynamic, and mostly invisible. This means that some days I can function without needing much support at all. Some days, however, I might struggle a lot with energy levels, mobility and executive function. I sometimes work irregular patterns and take irregular rest periods as a result of working.

### **Baseline support you can provide:**

- I rely on being able to drive to work locations, but don't have a blue badge. Clear directions to the nearest parking is essential, or onsite provision reserved.
- Space to rest and stretch.
- Heating equipment e.g. a personal heater /or heated workspace. Access to a nearby warm space if working outside.
- Comfortable seating with back support.
- Regular breaks.
- Workdays not to exceed 8hrs (including breaks).
- Flexible working, including scheduled rest days.
- Step-free access.
- Open communication around access.

I regularly work with an Access Support Worker. They support me with my day-to-day work and shouldn't replace access support accommodations by organisations/funders/partners on project-specific working. Please copy them into all emails unless otherwise directed.

### **What is a 'flare-up' for me?**

My disability is dynamic, meaning it changes day to day. A flare-up can happen for me as a result of my access requirements not being met, from me overextending, or sometimes without a clear cause. A flare can last anywhere from a few days to months at a time. I will communicate with you directly if I am having a flare.

### **During a flare I might:**

- Be low energy or drowsy.
- Struggle with mobility: particularly walking, taking the stairs, carrying objects, standing, and staying in one position.

- Struggle with executive function: brain fog, difficulty starting and finishing tasks, more prone to mistakes, difficulty concentrating, recalling information, or processing information quickly.
- Be more likely to be irritated, distracted, or overstimulated.
- Be low mood/motivation.

### **Essential support during a pain-flare:**

- Capacity to take time off and rest
- Step-free access
- Clear on-site parking or taxis
- Nearby space to rest and stretch
- Working in close proximity to everything I need
- Heated workspace
- Comfortable seating
- Regular breaks
- Flexible working including shorter days
- Working alongside an Access Support Worker

### **Useful support during a pain-flare:**

- Regular check-ins
- Reduced and succinct communications
- Phone calls instead of video calls or in-person meetings

### **Mental health**

My fluctuating condition, and the effect it has on me and my life, can also affect my mental health, particularly during prolonged pain flares.

My medication can affect my mood, as can being in pain. When in pain, I'm more easily irritated or overstimulated.

Masking as a result of pain while doing audience-facing or facilitation work can be really exhausting.

### **Communication preferences**

- My preferred method of communication is email.
- I'm happy to be contacted on WhatsApp (voicenotes or text) for emergencies or urgent communications during normal work hours (9-5 Mon-Friday).
- I'm happy resolving quick or small issues over WhatsApp (voicenotes or text) but sometimes get overwhelmed by longer messages/exchanges on there.
- I'm happy using video-conferencing platforms and speaking over the phone. Sometimes the telephone is easier for me when I have low energy.
- As I manage a fluctuating condition, I appreciate patience when my response time is longer. I also appreciate nudges if you suspect I have missed an email or query.
- I appreciate information passed on as succinctly as possible.

## **Context-specific needs**

### **Installs/Construction/Fabrication**

I will require an Access Support Worker to work directly with, or on behalf of me for any substantial physical work.

I can't lift heavy items or move large objects and furniture. Repeated repetitive movements or activities will negatively impact my pain levels. Prolonged periods of labour should be punctuated by regular breaks and opportunities to stretch and swap to a different type of work if I need to.

Extra time needs to be planned into project management on larger install or fabrication projects for scheduled rest days, and ideally additional capacity in timelines for responsive rest.

### **Events, workshops and groups**

Set-up/packdowns – I can't lift heavy items or move large objects and furniture. I need a support worker to do these tasks for me.

Where possible, regular breaks and opportunities to stretch and swap to a different type of work if I need to.

Lots of time on my feet is also difficult for me. I require a chair with back support, and space and time to rest. I would prefer work doesn't exceed an 8hrs day including travel.

I can sometimes find social gatherings quite draining, particularly if lead-facilitating challenging or emotional topics. Masking pain is tiring. Time to rest and recuperate should be considered.

### **Workspace conditions for desk-working**

If working at a desk for a prolonged period, I prefer a desktop computer over a laptop. Alternatively using a laptop stand, keyboard and mouse, so that my workstation reflects the standard of government Display Screen Equipment Regulations.

I require a desk chair with appropriate back and neck support. I cannot work on stools, or at bars for prolonged periods of time. Example of an appropriate chair.

Working in a cold environment will also quite quickly result in more pain and stiffness for me. If working in a cold space, a personal heater can help alleviate this. See gov. guidelines around workplace temperatures.

## **Zoom/digital video calls**

- Calls not to exceed 2.5 hours
- Regular breaks
- Will turn camera off and take breaks as and when I need to stretch
- Support worker if I am facilitating challenging discussion topics

## **Travel and parking**

I find travel very tiring, particularly if traveling with equipment. I would prefer that my standard workday doesn't exceed 8 hours **including** travel.

I mostly rely on being able to drive to work, but don't have a blue badge. Clear directions from the workspace to the nearest parking is essential, or onsite provision reserved for me. My car reg is ABC 123.

For distances exceeding two hours, I prefer trains and taxis to driving myself.

During a pain-flare, or if I am bringing equipment, I require on-site parking or a taxi from home/a train station. I might also need to travel with a support worker.

## **Working away from home**

In the case of travelling extended distances or having an 8-hour workday on top of travel, I require overnight accommodation.

Accommodation needs to be step-free, have on-site parking, and near the work site.

Ideally the accommodation would have a bath (for pain relief) and a place to prepare meals, essential for longer stays.

I may require additional accommodation and travel budget for a Support Worker to accompany me.

## **Hours**

My pain generally worsens throughout the day, so evening working requires more from me. When working into the evening I require a restful morning and shorter hours.

Allowing me flexibility to work on projects outside of 9-5 regular office hours, or offering flexible hours, allows me to manage my pain and energy levels more consistently, and spread out my workload. I don't expect that others will respond to any communications outside of regular office hours.

# Links and supporting info

## For further reading and more examples of access documents:

- [Access Docs for Artists website](#) by Leah Clements, Alice Hattrick, and Lizzy Rose
- [Little Cog Artist Access Statements](#)
- [Musicians Union's Access Riders for Disabled Musicians](#)
- [Disability Arts Online's Access Rider Open Template](#)
- [Diversity Arts Culture's Access Rider resource](#)

## More useful resources

- [An article on Spoon Theory](#).
- [An explanation of the social model of disability](#).
- [Display Screen Equipment regulations](#) for how to protect workers from health risks of working at a desk.
- [Scoliosis Association UK](#) – a good resource to learn more about Scoliosis, types of Scoliosis, symptoms, treatment and FAQs.
- [Your rights as a disabled person at work](#)



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