



# Checklist for Making Science Labs Accessible to Students with Disabilities

**DO-IT**

An activity that can lead to greater awareness and more inclusive science labs

Name and location of science lab reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact name, phone, email: \_\_\_\_\_

Students with disabilities face access challenges to typical science labs in precollege and postsecondary settings. Access barriers may prevent a student from

- gaining knowledge
- demonstrating knowledge
- fully participating in lab activities

## Accommodations and Universal Design

There are two approaches for making academic activities accessible to students with disabilities—accommodations and universal design. An accommodation makes adjustments for a specific student with a disability, such as assistive technology or providing materials in alternate formats. The goal of universal design is products and environments that are usable by everyone (including people with disabilities), to the greatest extent possible, minimizing the need for accommodations for individuals in the future. For example, if a science lab contains an adjustable-height workstation, an accommodation will not be needed for a student who uses a wheelchair that is too high for standard-height workstations. This workstation may also be comfortable for a student who needs to remain seated because of a health impairment or someone who is very tall or short in stature. Making accommodations is reactive, whereas universal design is proactive.



## Universal Design of Science Labs

It is likely that some universal design strategies are already in place in the science lab you are reviewing and others could be implemented soon. The following checklist will help you identify both. For each of the strategies listed, indicate the following in the Status section of the checklist.

- **N/A**—if the suggestion is not applicable to the science lab being reviewed
- **Done**—if the strategy is already in place
- **[date]**—for items that will be implemented by a specific target date/month/year
- **TBC**—for strategies to be considered for future implementation
- **Other**—with an explanation



<b>Status</b>	<b>Strategy, Planning, Policies, and Evaluation</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	Are people with disabilities included in planning and evaluating lab products and services?	
	Do you require that accessibility be considered in the procurement process for lab products?	
	Do you have a procedure to ensure a timely response to requests for disability-related accommodations?	
	Are disability-related access issues addressed in your evaluation methods?	
	<b>Physical Environments</b>	
	Are parking areas, pathways, and entrances to the building wheelchair-accessible and clearly marked?	
	Are all levels of the facility connected via an accessible route of travel?	
	Are there high-contrast, large-print signs to and throughout the lab?	
	Is at least part of a service counter or desk at a height accessible from a seated position?	
	Are aisles wide and clear of obstructions for wheelchair users as well as people with mobility or visual impairments?	
	Are there quiet work or meeting areas where noise and other distractions are minimized?	



<b>Status</b>	<b>Strategy, Planning, Policies, and Evaluation</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	Have you addressed safety procedures for students with hearing impairments (e.g., instructions in print and visual lab warning signals)?	
	Have you addressed safety procedures for students with visual impairments (e.g., large print signage)?	
	Have you addressed safety procedures for students with mobility impairments (e.g., fire extinguisher that can be reached from a seated position)?	
	<b>Lab Staff</b>	
	Are staff members familiar with the availability and use of assistive technology and alternate document formats?	
	Do staff members know how to respond to requests for disability-related accommodations such as sign language interpreters?	
	<b>Information Resources</b>	
	Do pictures in your publications and website include people with disabilities?	
	In key publications, do you include a statement about procedures for requesting disability-related accommodations?	
	Are all printed publications available (immediately or in a timely manner) in alternate formats such as Braille, large print, and electronic text?	



<b>Status</b>	<b>Strategy, Planning, Policies, and Evaluation</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	Can lab publications be reached from a seated position?	
	Do electronic resources, including web pages, adhere to accessibility guidelines or standards?	
	<b>Equipment</b>	
	Is an adjustable-height table available for each type of workstation in the lab? Can the height be adjusted from a seated position?	
	Is equipment marked with large-print and/or Braille labels?	
	Do you buy plastic products instead of glass when available?	
	Do you provide non-slip mats, beaker and object clamps/stands, beakers and equipment with handles, and/or surgical gloves to handle slippery items?	
	Can controls on lab equipment be reached from a seated position?	
	Are adequate work areas available for both right- and left-handed users?	



Overall, how accessible do you think this facility is for people with the disabilities listed below? Explain your responses. In the second column summarize the most important recommendations for making the facility / program more welcoming and accessible to people with these types of disabilities.

Disability Type and Access Issues	Accessibility Recommendations
Blind with low vision	
Deaf or hard of hearing	
Mobility impairment	
Learning or other invisible disability	
Other disability	

Other comments about this checklist, this facility / program, and / or your overall experience:



## About DO-IT

DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) serves to increase the successful participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs such as those in science, engineering, mathematics, and technology. Primary funding for DO-IT is provided by the National Science Foundation, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Department of Education.

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## Acknowledgment

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Cooperative Agreement #HRD-0833504. Any opinions, findings, and conclusion or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.



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