

LITTLE  
**BIG**  
LESSONS

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School Program

PRESENTED BY



FUTURE PROSPECTS

Scotiabank®

# Accessibility Inspectors

**RECOMMENDED FOR GRADES 3-7**

# LITTLE **BIG** LESSONS

## **Introduction:**

To have a disability means a person is unable to use or are missing certain parts of the body. This does not necessarily mean that they can't do things that everyone else can do. It just means that sometimes they need tools such as a wheelchair to help them accomplish tasks, or change the way they do things.

Sometimes there are obstacles that prevent people from doing something. Here are some examples:

- Someone may not be tall enough to be allowed on a ride at the amusement park.
- If a person has a physical disability, then may not be able to use the stairs. Stairs would be a barrier.
- If a person is visually impaired then they may not be able to see a TV or objects in the classroom. These would be a barrier.
- If a person has a hearing disability, then they may not be able to hear you talk with them. This would be a barrier.

We are going to look at how we can change our environment to ensure that people with disabilities can be included and do everything that everyone else can do.

## **Definitions:**

**Accessible** means the absence of obstacles and that the environment is available to as many people as possible. Can everyone access your home?

**Being blind or partially sighted (low vision)** means that you have trouble seeing. You might use a sensing cane, a seeing-eye dog, or very strong prescription glasses.

**Being deaf or hard of hearing** means that you have trouble hearing. You might use sign language to communicate or a hearing aid device. Hearing assistive technology may or may not be used in conjunction with hearing aids.

**Physical disability** means that you do not have the use of your whole body, such as arms and legs. You might use a wheelchair, leg braces, or an artificial limb (prosthetic limb).

## School Accessibility Inspection

*Dear Inspectors,*

*Your school needs to be inspected for accessibility. This is a very important mission, so get your detective gear ready!*



1. Do you find the volume in your classroom distracting? Yes  No
2. Are there any Braille signs in your classroom or school? Yes  No
3. Do all the stairs in the hallway have a handrail you can hold on to? Yes  No
4. Is the hallway clear of things you could trip on, such as boxes, books and backpacks?  
Yes  No
5. Do the signs and posters in your classroom have contrasting colours (example: light background and dark writing)? Yes  No
6. Is there a sign for your classroom with big letters or numbers? Yes  No
7. Are all students' names written somewhere in the classroom? Yes  No

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8. Are there signs in the hallway that point to the washroom? Yes  No
9. Does your classroom have a smoke detector that lights up? Yes  No
10. Is there a map inside your classroom that shows where the closest emergency exit is?  
Yes  No
11. Do you open your classroom door using a lever instead of a door knob? Yes  No
12. Do you have any ramps or elevators for people who can't use the stairs? (If your school does not have any stairs inside, check "yes".) Yes  No
13. Is there a special washroom for someone with a disability? Yes  No
14. Does your school have a push button for an automatic door at each entrance? Yes  No
15. Is there a water fountain in the hallway you can use if you are sitting down? (Use a chair to find out!) Yes  No

How many 'Yes' answers do you have?  / 15 = Score

## Accessibility Grade

Now it's time to figure out your school's accessibility grade. What grade will you give your school?

13 – 15 points

Terrific! Your school has terrific accessibility and almost no barriers! Well done, Inspector!

10 – 13 points

Good! Your school has good accessibility with just a few barriers. Well done, Inspector!

7 – 10 points

Ok. Your school is kind of accessible, but it has some barriers. Well done, Inspector!

0 – 6 points

Needs work. Your school has low accessibility with many barriers. Finding barriers is a good thing. Well done, Inspector!

What ideas can you share about how to improve the accessibility of your classroom and/or school?

## Home Accessibility Inspection

*Dear Inspectors,*

*Your home needs to be inspected for accessibility. This is a very important mission, so get your detective gear ready!*



1. Does your house have lots of light? Yes  No
2. Does your furniture have different textures, so people can feel the difference? Yes  No
3. Are your kitchen table chairs pushed in so that the space is clear for someone to walk by?  
Yes  No
4. Does your living room rug have a solid colour? Patterns are difficult for low vision friends to see.  
Yes  No
5. Do you have plates and cups in cabinets or drawers that everyone can reach? Yes  No
6. Are the hallways clear of things you could trip on, such as toys, backpacks, or shoes?  
Yes  No
7. Do you have a slip-resistant lining in your bathtub? Yes  No

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8. If you have any stairs, do they have a handrail? Yes  No
9. Do you have sensor lights outside if anyone walks onto the property? Yes  No
10. Do you have carpeting throughout all areas in your home? This helps with the echo or vibrations your washing machine and other appliances can make. Yes  No
11. Do you have a flashing smoke alarm or carbon monoxide alarm? This allows people to see the alarm going off. Yes  No
12. Is the pathway to the front door smooth (without cracks)? Yes  No
13. Is there a washroom that has enough space for a wheelchair to move around in? Yes  No
14. Is the furniture in your home laid out so a wheelchair could get through every room?  
Yes  No
15. Do the doors in your home have lever handles you can push instead of doorknobs?  
Yes  No

How many 'Yes' answers do you have?  / 15 = Score

## Accessibility Grade

Now it's time to figure out your home's accessibility grade. What grade will you give your home?

13 – 15 points

Terrific! Your home has terrific accessibility and almost no barriers! Well done, Inspector!

10 – 13 points

Good! Your home has good accessibility with just a few barriers. Well done, Inspector!

7 – 10 points

Ok. Your home is kind of accessible, but it has some barriers. Well done, Inspector!

0 – 6 points

Needs work. Your home has low accessibility with many barriers. Finding barriers is a good thing. Well done, Inspector!

What ideas can you share about how to improve the accessibility of your home?



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## **Teacher Notes**

### Optional Concluding Discussion:

Discuss barriers and how they could be addressed in your school and in your students' homes:

- Out of all the barriers you circled, which one is the easiest to change?
- Would you feel included at school if you couldn't get through the front door of the school or you couldn't play on the playground?

## **Signs and light**

For someone with a vision disability, large signs with big text and high contrast colours (e.g. white letters on black background) are helpful. Even if you have a vision disability, you might be able to see colours, shapes, and large text. For legally blind persons, braille on all signs is helpful, as are signs that make noises (such as crosswalk signs).

For the Deaf or hard of hearing, clear signs are important for navigating spaces. Signs and maps help someone who is hard of hearing in cases of emergency.

Note: Many people who are Deaf use American Sign Language as their primary language, so while written material is helpful, lengthy text might still be difficult to understand, similar to reading documents in a foreign language.

Clocks are another important visual tool. If you are a Deaf student at school, you might not be able to hear the bells. You need a clock to keep track of time in places like classrooms and the library.

Displaying students' names in a classroom helps students with a hearing disability learn their classmates' names. It is a very basic but important way to have all students involved in the social dynamics of a classroom.

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## **Noise and echo**

For the blind and partially sighted, spaces are more accessible when there are no competing noises. Because written instructions and visual cues are difficult to see, auditory cues and the ability to hear these cues is important.

For the Deaf or hard of hearing, ambient noises, such as traffic or echoes, can interfere with sound that can be perceived. Even if you have a hearing disability, you might be able to hear some sounds. A quiet classroom without noise helps you hear as much as possible.

## **Smooth vs. textured surfaces**

For someone with a severe visual disability and for someone who uses a mobility device, smooth surfaces without objects or ledges in the path are ideal. For example, playgrounds are more accessible if they do not use stones/gravel or woodchips and do not have a curb around the play area. Loose surfaces, curbs, and ledges are all hazards.

Similarly, indoor flooring makes a space more accessible if it does not change in texture.

Flooring that includes area carpets can create a hazard because the carpets can move.

For someone with a vision disability, stairs that have textured strips or grooved edges are important indicators of where one stair ends and another begins. Sturdy handrails that are round and sufficiently far from the wall allow for easy gripping. Railings are also used to understand where a staircase begins, ends, and turns.

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## **Special access**

For someone who does not have hands or fingers or for someone who has a muscular condition, doorknobs are much harder to manipulate (hold, turn, and push) than levers.

For someone who uses a wheelchair or has a disability affecting their hands, it is easier to push open doors than it is to pull open doors. Also, lighter weight doors are easier to use than heavier doors. A heavy door that requires you to pull needs to be power-operated to be accessible.

For someone who uses a wheelchair or mobility device, grab rails in a washroom stall are necessary for independent use of the toilet.

For the Deaf or hard of hearing, it is important that spaces can be entered and used without needing to talk to someone, otherwise, someone needs to be present who knows ASL. While signs help people with a hearing disability, long written text is not always optimal, as English might not be the primary language of someone who is deaf.

## **Personal assistance**

For someone who uses a wheelchair, it is important that another person or staff member be present in areas where objects are often out of reach (e.g. a library with books on shelves).

For the blind or partially sighted, a greeter or staff member may be necessary to help guide someone through an unfamiliar space. Guiding might mean physically helping someone navigate a space or verbally explaining the layout and where items are. The more confusing the layout of the place, the more difficult it is to mentally visualize it and navigate without assistance.

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## **Websites**

For the blind or partially sighted, special online accessibility features, such as speaking text or the option of a large font size, are important for finding and understanding information.

## **Furniture and devices**

For someone who uses a wheelchair, moveable desks, tables and chairs are important for creating space for a wheelchair. This is true in classrooms as well as communal spaces, where a parent or grandparent who uses a mobility device might want to watch their child perform in a school play or concert.

For someone who does not have hands or fingers or for someone who has a muscular condition, typing sticks make typing on computers easier. Typing might be much easier to do than writing with a pencil (e.g. if a student has cerebral palsy).

To find out more or download our resources, visit [www.rickhansen.com/schools](http://www.rickhansen.com/schools), call 1.800.213.2131 or email [schools@rickhansen.com](mailto:schools@rickhansen.com).



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