

Tips for FIRST TIME TRAIN USERS

Mind the Gap: A Reference Guide for People with Physical Disabilities Riding Trains



Be Courageous

Trying something new can be daunting – be brave and take the risk!



Plan Ahead

- Find a seasoned traveler to show you the ropes or consider a travel training program (if available in your area).
- Take a tour of the train station & train car.
- Take a short trip on the train prior to any longer travel.
- Make reservations for accessible seats.
- Ask about reduced priced fares for people with disabilities (and support staff).
- Plan your route of travel. Check departure and arrival times.

Research Train Station Accessibility

Check that planned station stops are accessible by calling or visiting the stations. Specific features to ask about: availability of accessible restrooms, steepness of ramps, working order of elevators, accessibility of ticket counters or ticket machines, whether station is staff by railway personnel that can provide assistance, and parking availability.

Plan to be Assertive

- You should be prepared to ask for what you need.
- Be aware that most train staff are not well trained in supporting people with disabilities, so don't assume that they will know what supports you might need.
- Remember that you have the right to accessible transportation and that railway staff are required to provide needed supports to make the train accessible.



Be Prepared

- Arrive early. Plan extra time in your travel schedule to accommodate delays.
- If you use adaptive equipment, pack a small tool kit for repairs.
- If you use an electric wheelchair, pack your charger. There are often electrical outlets on trains and you can charge your chair while you ride.



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Boarding & Deboarding the Train

- Find the railway personnel that is responsible for assisting you to safely board the train.
- Find the railcar with the universal symbol of accessibility.
- If needed, ask railway personnel to find and position the bridge plate.
- Many people with disabilities who require the use of a bridge plate describe the boarding and deboarding process as the most challenging and sometimes frightening part of train travel. Be prepared to be anxious but take the challenge and cross the gap.
- If you use adaptive equipment, tell railway staff exactly how they should handle your equipment during the boarding and deboarding process. Remember that no one knows how to manage your equipment better than you, so be assertive and direct with staff about what is and what is not acceptable.



On the Train Environment

- Once on board the train, find the seating area designated for travelers with disabilities.
- On most railways, the conductor will come around to punch your ticket. At that time, make it known when you plan to deboard the train and what assistance you will require to do so. Remind the conductor frequently throughout the trip of your destination.
- If the train has a meal car /club car, you can ask the railway personnel to make a purchase for you and bring it to your seat.
- Accessible restrooms are typically available in accessible railcars, but be aware it is often difficult to maneuver wheelchairs in those tight spaces.
- If you haven't seen the conductor in awhile and you are close to your final destination, ask another traveler on the train to please find the conductor for you.



And most importantly, HAVE FUN!

Train travel is a mode of transportation enjoyed by many people. So sit back and enjoy the ride.

