Accessible restaurant bookings: questions that help guests plan

Give guests specific information about your venue and ask what would help them use the service comfortably.

Practical staff guidance; adapt the suggested workflow to your venue and current procedures.

Describe what is actually available

Prepare a short factual description of arrival routes, entrances, seating, toilets and communication options. Check it against the current premises and service. A phrase such as “fully accessible” can leave important questions unanswered. Specific information lets guests judge the features that matter to their own visit.

Ask an open practical question

A useful opening is: “Is there anything we can arrange or explain to help with your visit?” Listen to the requested arrangement and discuss what can be confirmed. Speak directly with the guest and respect their preferred communication method. Staff can provide helpful service information without asking for a medical history.

Confirm the arrangement clearly

Explain where the guest should arrive, who can help and what has been reserved or arranged. If a request needs checking, agree who will respond and when. Record only the information needed to deliver the arrangement and limit it to the appropriate team. VisitEngland’s toolkit offers further guidance on an inclusive welcome and accessibility information.

Keep the handover accurate

A booking promise needs to reach the shift team. Include the operational arrangement in the approved booking system and brief the colleague responsible. If something changes before the visit, contact the guest through the agreed channel. Review recurring questions to improve the venue information published on the website.

Worked example

Fictional example: a guest asks about a step at the entrance. The booking colleague describes the actual route and checks the available arrangement with the manager. They confirm it with the guest and record the agreed arrival details for the shift team.

Your next steps

- Check the venue facts.
- Ask what would help.
- Confirm available arrangements.
- Record the minimum operational information.
- Handover and update changes.

Ask about the experience the guest needs

Use an open, practical question: what would help you use the venue comfortably? Explain the available arrangements accurately and allow the guest to choose. Relevant details may include step-free routes, door widths, seating, toilets, noise or a communication preference. Where you do not know an answer, check it and agree how you will respond. Avoid asking for unnecessary medical details to fulfil a service request.

Complete the handover before arrival

Fictional example: a guest requests a step-free route and a table with room for mobility equipment. The reservations colleague checks the route and table, records the agreed arrangement and passes it to the host. If the layout changes, the team contacts the guest with accurate information and available choices. The record should say what was agreed and who will deliver it, without spreading personal details beyond the people involved.

Should staff assume help is wanted?

Ask respectfully and follow the guest's preference. Assistance, communication and equipment needs vary. A standard script should support a conversation and leave room for an individual answer.

Audit the booking-to-arrival promise

Choose one fictional guest request and follow it through the entire system. Check the public website information, the reservation conversation, the record, the host's handover and the route on arrival. Look for gaps between what is promised and what can be delivered. For example, a step-free entrance description is incomplete if the entrance is locked and staff do not know who has the key. Assign an owner to correct the operational issue and the public information together. Invite real feedback when available, while keeping individual details private. This method gives the team a practical way to check the service and record improvements.

Describe what the venue can verify

Useful access information gives specific facts about the relevant journey. Explain the entrance, steps or ramp, available seating and toilet arrangement using accurate measurements or descriptions where needed. If a photograph helps, make sure it shows the current route and provide explanatory text. Avoid a broad accessibility claim that hides an important limitation. A guest should be able to ask a follow-up question and receive an answer from someone who can check the actual space. Review the information when furniture, entrances or booking arrangements change.

Plan a respectful service conversation

A colleague can ask, "What would help you use the table and service comfortably?" and then explain the options available. Speak to the guest directly and follow their communication preference. If they have a companion, do not assume the companion should answer every question. Allow time for the guest to decide. Record the agreed service arrangement in the approved system with only the details needed to deliver it. The team should know the practical action, while unnecessary health information can remain private.

Resolve an unavailable arrangement early

If a promised arrangement becomes unavailable, check the facts and contact the guest through the agreed route with accurate alternatives. Explain what has changed and what choices can genuinely be offered. A last-minute surprise at the entrance can be much harder to resolve. Record the communication and inform the host so the guest receives a consistent answer. Afterwards, identify whether the cause was a maintenance issue, booking conflict or inaccurate public information and correct the source as well as the individual reservation.

Accessible service exercise: the quiet entrance has a locked door

A guest asks to use the quieter entrance shown on the booking information. The door is locked and staff normally redirect people through a crowded bar. How should the host respond?

Compare your decision

Ask the guest what would work for them. Check whether the advertised route can be opened safely by the responsible colleague. Describe any alternative in concrete terms, including distance, steps or waiting. Get agreement before assisting or touching mobility equipment.

After service, compare the booking information with the route actually offered. Assign someone to check access before the next opening.

Sources and editorial basis

- VisitEngland — Accessible and inclusive tourism toolkit
- ICO — Data minimisation

Guidance checked on 19 October 2026. Examples and worksheets are original suggested workflows; adapt them to your operation.

Use this on shift

Resource page and fillable working record · Read the online guide · Course details