



How to Ride the Bus

Non-disabled people can take the act of riding the bus for granted. It is usually played out like a coordinated dance: they stand at the designated bus stop the bus driver sees them, stops at the curb and opens the door. The rider pays easily, takes a seat and off the bus goes down the street. However, for people with disabilities riding the bus can be more complicated. In order to aid the fellow disabled traveler, this tip-sheet has a list of points for how to make the wheels of the bus go 'round and round' with YOU on board.

1. If you are a wheelchair user, make sure there is transportation in your city and that it is accessible. You do not want to be waiting at the curb for a bus for a long period and then find out that you cannot even get on. Visit your city's public transportation website to find out if an accessible city bus is available.
2. Find out if there are disability discounts for taking mass transportation, how it works and what the rules are.
3. Know the cost for taking the bus **BEFORE** you get on. There may be different kinds of transportation that you will use. It may be a public city bus or it can be a city-funded transportation bus for the disabled. For either kind you will need to pay to ride. You'll need to be prepared to pay the correct amount, either with change or with a special card used to pay on buses. This card is sometimes called a bus pass card or a metro card. You can purchase these cards at some bus stops or other locations. Look on your city's transportation website for more information.
4. Know the route that you are going to take to get from point A to B. Also be sure to know the name of the stop(s) where you are getting off in order to tell the driver when you first get on the bus. **A SIDE NOTE**, if you require assistance getting on the bus, the driver will want to know where you are getting off in order to be able to stop the bus appropriately at the curb. Especially if it is crowded, the driver needs extra time to maneuver the bus and to get on and off to help you.
5. Also know the route to get back to where you started (from point B to A). It may be longer or shorter, so be aware.
6. Know what time the bus comes to your stop and the times of the bus or buses you will be taking on your route. You can find this information on the "bus time schedule". You may have to transfer (change) buses to get where you want to go. Be aware of when buses come to each stop on your route to decrease your waiting period. Even with changing (transferring) busses, knowing the "bus



7. time schedule” can help with waiting time. Then there will be less chance of being late to your dates, appointments, etc.
8. **REMEMBER:** drivers on busses are people too and have a lot to keep track of on the job. So if you require assistance, they may forget you are riding and/or where you get off. When getting closer to your stop (destination) remind the driver in some way that it is your time to go. You can do this just by pressing a strip, yelling out, or asking someone kindly to pass on your message to the driver.
9. Make sure you are standing at the correct bus stop and make sure the driver knows that you are waiting for that bus route. Most times more than one bus stops at a single bus stop.
10. If you are the only passenger waiting for the bus and the driver passes you, or stops and ignores you over other non-disabled passengers, make sure to get down the number of the bus so you can call and complain to the city transportation company. Do not think it is useless. If there are enough complaints, or if a single complaint is significant enough, the driver will be told they did something wrong.
11. If you are in a wheelchair, the driver may need a key to unlock the lift or ramp. Things happen, so sometimes the driver may not have the key. In certain areas of the country you can get a copy of a key to unlock the ramp. Contact the city transportation company in your area in order to acquire a key. It should not cost you anything, and it will definitely save you premature gray hairs.
12. Ask a friend who is an expert mass-transportation-traveler for advice on which routes to take to and from your destination.
13. Practice! If this is your first time taking the bus, you may want to do a practice ride with a friend. Practice paying for yourself. Practice telling the driver where you’ll need to get off the bus. If you use a wheelchair or scooter, practice asking the driver for assistance and using the ramp or lift. Practicing can make you feel a lot more comfortable and if you practice with a friend, you’ll know if something goes wrong they’ll be there to help.

One other thing to think about is the **WEATHER**. Particularly during the winter and sometimes during other seasons severe weather can happen. During the winter, be aware of a lot of snowfall. If you use a wheelchair and a ramp or lift needs to be unfolded to board the bus, snow on the curb can make this harder. City cleanup of snow can be lacking. Sometimes drivers do not make sure can board the bus safely (you would be surprised). Therefore a suggestion is to stay home that day or that week. Another possibly expensive solution is to pay someone to shovel the bus stop. In the case of a downpour of rain, regardless of your disability, you may also



want to stay home and wait it out. Drivers should take their time to help you board, but catching pneumonia does not do anybody good.

Using the bus can be fun. Most importantly you get to go where you want, when you want!

Resources

- To find a public transit system where you live, visit:
<http://www.publictransportation.org/systems/Default.asp>
This website lists the different public transportation options in each state.
- Your phone book directory for your city should also list phone numbers for the public transit offices in your area. They are usually listed in the “Blue pages” of the phone book. You can also ask if there is a door to door transit service for people with disabilities [the city-funded transportation bus for the disabled mentioned in number 3 of this tip-sheet]. These services for disabled individuals usually have a different rate or an application process you have to go through to get approved to use it.
- The National Accessible Travelers Database (NATD)
The NATD stores information on accessible travel options in cities across the US. Entries include details on transit, paratransit, taxi, airport shuttles and many other transportation services.
http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_travelers_database
- Easter Seals Project ACTION
They have several free training materials for youth on how to ride the bus on their website at:
http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_resources_supporting_young_adults
To learn more about Easter Seals Project ACTION go to:
<http://projectaction.easterseals.com>

Words to know:

Bus stop: Where you can get on and off a public city bus.

Route: A route is the detailed description of which roads each bus drives down every day and the times they get to “bus stops” on these roads. It can also describe *your route*, what busses you need to take to get where you want to go.