



# RUDERMAN SYNAGOGUE INCLUSION PROJECT



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## MAKING SPACE IN OUR SANCTUARIES FOR PEOPLE WHO USE WHEELCHAIRS

A major tenet of inclusion is making metaphorical space in our communities for those who feel excluded. But often we forget the importance of creating the right physical space for those who need it, either because they sit in a wheelchair, use a walker to get to their seat, or have another assistive device. This guide offers a few steps to help create this space and make it useful.

### How to Make the Space

1. The best space would be set up using unconnected, removable chairs. It's also important to allow those with disabilities who use the space the opportunity to suggest an arrangement that suits their needs.
2. If you have fixed pews or chairs, you will need to make cuts at the end of the bench to create a space for assistive devices. Try to make these cuts anticipating peoples' diverse needs. Some people like to sit in the back, while others may prefer the front. Everybody wants decent access to the bathroom.
3. Always make sure that your space preserves evacuation safety and traffic flow. Everyone wants a place, but they want to be safe, too. Never block evacuation routes.

### Using the Space You've Created

1. Respect the person's autonomy. Just because you've made what you feel is the perfect space doesn't mean they want to sit there. Listen to what they ask for, and if it is possible and safe, try to make it happen.
2. Respect the body of the person sitting in the space. One should not assume that a person is physically-abled, as he or she may be sitting away from their assistive device.
3. Always be ready. Never fill accessible spaces with chairs or physically-abled people unless you know the spots will not be used by those who need them.