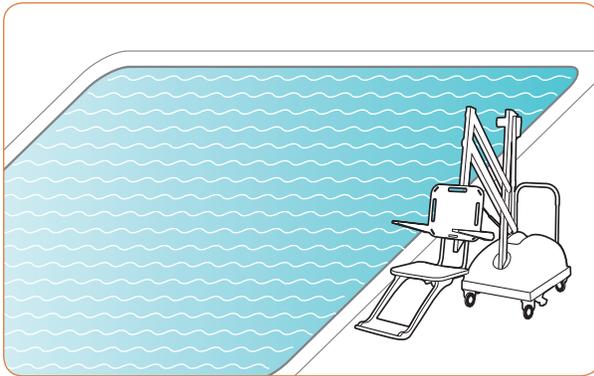


Means of Access for Swimming Pools

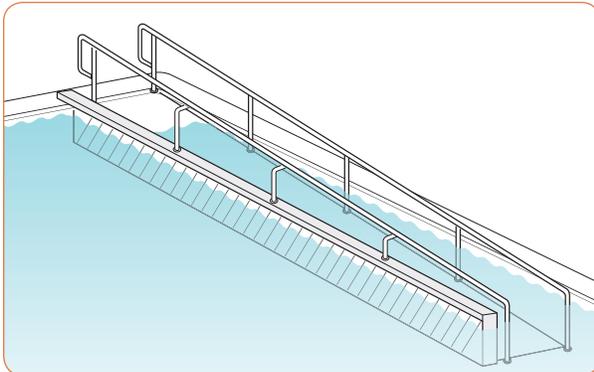
The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) identifies five means of access for swimming pools. Of these five, two are considered primary means of access: **Pool Lifts and Sloped Entries**. Facilities with swimming pools that have less than 300 linear feet of pool wall must use one of the primary means to provide access to their pools. Swimming pools that have more than 300 linear feet of pool wall must provide two means of access, at least one of which must be a primary means.

Primary Means of Access

The two primary means of access, as defined by ADAAG, are swimming pool lifts and sloped entries (including ramps).



Pool Lifts



Sloped Entries

Pool lifts must be capable of independent operation by a person with a disability, and must be located where the water level is no deeper than 48 inches. Seats on pool lifts must be a minimum of 16 inches

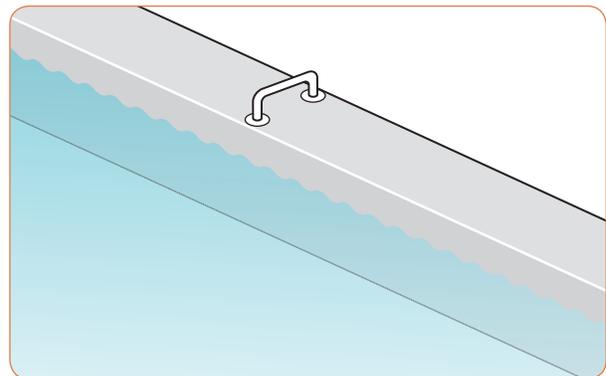
wide and the lift must have a weight capacity of 300 pounds. Additionally, the lift must submerge the user a minimum of 18" below the water level and must be equipped with foot rests. There should be ample clear deck space around the lift to facilitate transfers and the distance from the top of the seat surface to the pool deck should be a minimum of 16 inches.

Sloped entries must comply with ADAAG accessible route provisions. These provisions call for a minimum width of 36" and a maximum slope of 1:12 (1 foot of drop for every 12 feet of run). Sloped entries must extend to a depth of between 24" and 30" below the stationary water level. If the sloped entry is over 30 feet in length, an intermediate landing is required. Landings must be a minimum of 36 inches wide and 60 inches long. Sloped entries must have handrails on both sides. Facilities that use sloped entries are required to provide a mobile aquatic chair designed for pool access.

Secondary Means of Access

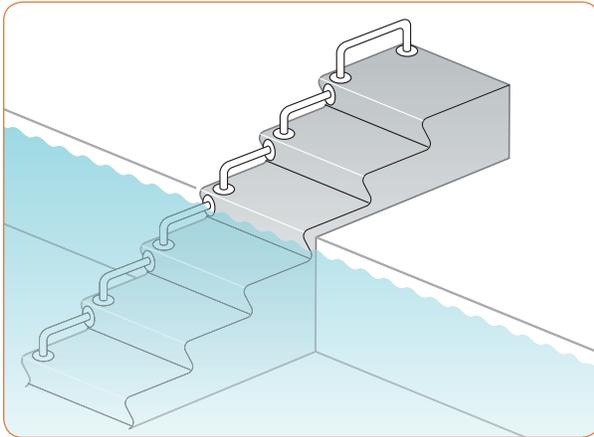
There are three approved secondary means of access: Transfer Walls, Transfer Systems and Pool Stairs. Secondary means can only be used on pools that already have a primary means of access in place. Additionally, primary means of access (pool lifts, sloped entries) also qualify as secondary means.

A transfer wall is a wall that allows a person to transfer from their wheelchair onto the pool wall and then into a pool or spa.

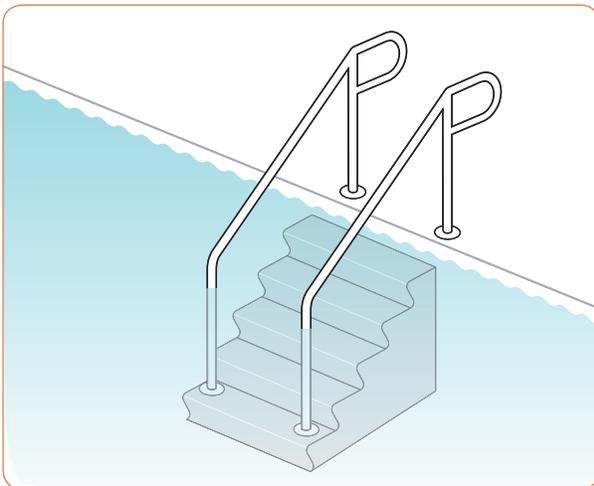


Transfer Wall

Transfer systems consist of a transfer platform and a series of transfer steps that descend into the water. Users transfer from a wheelchair onto the platform, then down into the water using the transfer steps.



Transfer System



Pool Stairs

Accessible pool stairs help provide balance and support for ambulatory users while transferring from the deck to the swimming pool.

Since secondary means of access can only be used in the presence of a primary means, this report will focus on the advantages and disadvantages of pool lifts and sloped entries.

Access Planning Considerations

When planning for swimming pool access, there are several important areas to consider before deciding which means of access to use: Location, Application (Commercial, Multi-Use, Competition, Therapy, etc), Clientele, Available Space, and Budget are all key considerations.

Pool Lifts

Pool lifts are the most flexible means of access. They come in a variety of shapes & sizes and offer a wide range of price points. ADA compliant pool lifts allow for independent operation by both ambulatory and non-ambulatory users. Pool lifts are generally easy to use. Transferring is straight forward and often facilitated by the lift's ability to position the chair in a favorable position for the transfer. Both portable and removable pool lifts can be stored away when not needed, or at times when they may interfere with an activity, such as a swim meet or a day camp. Since pool lifts are mechanical pieces of equipment, they do require regular routine maintenance.* Installation of non-portable lifts (removable and fixed) is fairly simple, requiring only a deck anchor to be installed. Portable lifts require no physical installation.

*The ADA's "Maintenance of Accessible Features" provision states that "a public accommodation shall maintain in operable working condition those features of facilities and equipment that are required to be readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities."

Sloped Entries

Sloped entries provide a safe and easy way for ambulatory individuals to gain swimming pool access. Once installed, sloped entries are virtually maintenance free. This method of access does, however, require significant space adjacent to the pool. A sloped entry that brings the user into 30 inches of water will be a minimum of 30 feet

long and three feet wide. Ideally, this entry would be constructed off to the side of the main pool in order to prevent interference with swimming lanes. Construction costs for sloped entries can be substantial, with estimates ranging from \$25,000—\$40,000, depending on the design of the ramp area.

Besides the cost and space requirements, the main downside of sloped entries is that they do not

provide universal independent access. Select users who can transfer on and off of a pool lift, may not have the strength to push an aquatic wheelchair up the ramp following an in-pool aquatic exercise session.

The following table illustrates the key points of difference between pool lifts and sloped entries:

Issue	Pool Lifts	Sloped Entries
Cost	\$4,000-\$8,000	\$25,000-\$40,000
Installation	None to simple	Major construction
Independent operation	Yes	Yes for ambulatory, no for non-ambulatory
Maintenance required	Yes	Generally, nothing beyond standard pool maintenance
Compatible with any pool?	Yes	Depends on available space
Requires a transfer	Yes	Yes for non-ambulatory, no for ambulatory
Requires an aquatic wheelchair	No	Yes

Sources: United States Access Board, ADA.Gov

For more information contact S.R.Smith at 1.877.325.0768 or email your questions to: access@srsmith.com