

# Sensory Friendly Tourism Checklist

Easy steps make your tourist location or  
event sensory-friendly.





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## **Set sensory-friendly hours.**

An easy way to start is to make some hours of operation sensory-friendly. Choose times with a lower volume of visitors anyways. Alternatively, open a little earlier or close a little later and make those times sensory-friendly. A good rule of thumb is to reduce noise and reduce bright, flashing lights for sensory-friendly times. You can reduce noise by turning off background music. Is there equipment onsite that also makes a lot of noise? Can it be turned off for a period of time? You want enough light so that people can see and are safe. But oftentimes there are spotlights, flashing lights, strobe lights or really bright lights that can be turned down or off too. Try to limit the number of people so that crowds are not overwhelming.

## **Make a day sensory-friendly.**

Sometimes adjusting hours is difficult and it is easier to set a day as sensory-friendly. That can be one day of a multi-day event or the same day a week, like Sensory Saturdays! Follow the same sensory-friendly principles, reduce noise and lights. Also, pay attention to the other senses. Reduce smells and scents, be scent-free if you can.

## **Create a sensory-friendly map.**

We highly recommend this sensory-friendly strategy. Create a map of your location that lets people know where quiet and noisy areas are. Tell people where to expect bright and flashing lights. Let people know where the bathrooms are and especially if they are accessible, gender-neutral or family-friendly. Have the map printed and available online for visitors to view.

## **Give out sensory kits.**

Sensory kits help people with sensory-sensitivity manage the experience. They often contain things like the map we cited above. But include things like hand fidgets and noise-canceling headphones too.



## **Offer to loan rent or sell noise-canceling headphones.**

This is especially important for autism-friendly places. As mentioned above, noise-canceling headphones are often included in a sensory kit. But making them available on their own is helpful too.

## **Have a sensory room.**

Create a space that gives people, of any age, the opportunity to be removed from the noise, crowds or brightness of your attraction and enjoy a bit of calm. So make it low noise, and lower light area. Add things like comfortable chairs. It doesn't have to be fancy! You can include some quiet toys for children or quiet activities too.

## **Provide staff training.**

Staff training can be formal or more informal. Organizations like us are asked to provide staff training for example. You can also reach out to local organizations that represent the many people with hidden disabilities who have sensory sensitivity to learn more about specific disabilities. With our CEO as an occupational therapist, we can share insights into all the disabilities affected by sensory sensitivity.

## **Arrange for a suggestion box.**

Asking for feedback can be scary. It is OK. You may not be able to fix everything for everyone all the time. But the best suggestions come from people who have direct experience. Ask people to tell you what they enjoy about your sensory-friendly attraction and ask them for suggestions on what to improve. More often, they are simple things that you can easily implement.

## **Establish quiet zones.**

Sometimes busy, noisy, bright is part of the sensory-rich experience of your tourist attraction or event. Other times it isn't possible to create a whole sensory-relaxed room. Creating a space that is quiet will be appreciated by many people. Reduce noise in this area and ask visitors to reduce their noise too. Post signs and let people know about quiet zones. Offer some seating too.



## **Hand out sensory-friendly lanyards.**

Some people are comfortable being identified with a special colored lanyard that indicates they have a hidden disability and might need more help from staff or will seek out all the sensory-friendly features you have to offer.

Have sensory-friendly lanyards available for people to wear at your location or event.

## **Bonus tip: let people know what to expect.**

This is the most important tip. Let visitors know what to expect. For children with autism, knowing what to expect in advance is very helpful. So this is key for autism-friendly places. It is also helpful to people with other disabilities that cause sensory sensitivities. It is OK that you are not able to reduce all the noise and all the lights.

Giving your guests information in advance about the sensory-experience is helpful. It lets them make a decision about whether or not your location or event is a match for what they want to experience. Tell people what sensory-friendly changes you have made (and also what sensory-rich features to expect that have not been changed).

Dear reader,

Thank you for downloading this Sensory Friendly Tourism Checklist.

Congratulations on taking a positive step towards creating a comfortable tourism experience for all your visitors. Many people find the world too busy, too noisy and too bright and are looking for sensory-friendly experiences. Tourism events and locations worldwide are making their destinations sensory-friendly in response.

This resource is personal to me. I have adult-onset hearing loss, wear hearing aids, use assistive devices and have struggled while travelling to find events and experiences that I enjoy.

This checklist will help you discover some simple steps you can take to offer a sensory-friendly experience at your event or location to be more inclusive and welcoming.

I founded Sensory-Friendly Solutions to make sensory-friendly solutions available to people, businesses and organizations.

Sensory Friendly Solutions' resources will help you learn more about sensory challenges and discover sensory-friendly solutions.

Join us on social media, download and subscribe to our podcast and visit our website to discover sensory-friendly solutions for everyday living.



With thanks,

Christel Seeberger  
Founder & CEO  
Sensory Friendly Solutions

