

## WHEELCHAIR-ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

### Words

Look for the following words as you read the passage. Match each word with its correct definition.

#### Words

1. abound
2. account for
3. capable
4. compact
5. corridor
6. curb<sup>1</sup>
7. disability
8. exterior
9. incapacitated
10. interior
11. necessitate
12. poverty
13. ramp
14. recreation
15. slippery
16. slope
17. switch
18. terrain
19. unwieldy
20. update

#### Definitions

- A. n., the condition of being poor
- B. n., a smooth surface that allows access between levels
- C. n., leisure activities
- D. v., to make necessary
- E. n., the outside of something
- F. adj., small
- G. v., to exist in large numbers
- H. adj., causing things to slide or slip, difficult to hold or stand on
- I. n., the raised edge of the street
- J. n., a surface at an angle, with the top higher than the bottom
- K. n., a button used to turn on lights or machines
- L. adj., able to do something
- M. n., the surface of land
- N. n., the inside of something
- O. adj., difficult to manage
- P. n., a condition that makes it difficult to do things other people do
- Q. v., to modernize<sup>2</sup>, improve
- R. adj., unable to do things normally
- S. n., hallway
- T. v., to be responsible for, be the cause of

Unit 8

<sup>1</sup>BrE: kerb

<sup>2</sup>BrE: modernise

## Reading

### Wheelchair Accessibility Issues

As many as 650 million people worldwide live with some form of physical disability, and about 100 million of the disabled need a wheelchair at least part of the time. Industrialized<sup>1</sup>, higher-income nations in Asia, Europe, and North America are seeing an older population grow more incapacitated as they age, whereas in lower-income countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, poverty, conflict, injuries, and accidents account for most disabilities, many of them in children.

Wheelchairs provide a more independent lifestyle, but they come with their own set of problems: They are wide, unwieldy, and difficult to maneuver<sup>2</sup> in tight spaces, on slippery surfaces, and on steep slopes—not to mention impassable stair steps. Accessibility issues abound at home, work, and school; in recreation activities; and in transportation<sup>3</sup>.

One of the most difficult places to use a wheelchair is the home. The average doorway width of about 76 centimeters<sup>4</sup> (30 inches) falls some 5 to 15 centimeters (2 to 6 inches) short of the space necessary to accommodate a wheelchair. To be accessible to a person in a wheelchair, bathrooms require grab bars in showers and tubs<sup>5</sup>, built-in shower seats, lower sinks and mirrors, and higher toilet seats. Kitchens need lower counters and shelves as well as accessible switches for lights, garbage disposals, and exhaust fans. Also, because most homes have at least a few steps, a wheelchair ramp is a must.

Many countries have laws requiring public buildings—workplaces, stores, restaurants, and entertainment and sports<sup>6</sup> facilities—to be wheelchair accessible. To accommodate wheelchairs, building exteriors need wide sidewalks<sup>7</sup> with curb cuts and ramps. Automatic doors, including those on elevators<sup>8</sup>, must be broad and remain open long enough for a person in a wheelchair to come and go with ease. In a building interior, corridors must be wide enough for a person in a wheelchair and another person on foot to pass side by side, and carpeting should be firm enough for wheelchairs to roll over easily. Restrooms<sup>9</sup> must be wheelchair accessible, too. Although many countries have made these improvements, many more have yet to follow their example.

<sup>1</sup>BrE: Industrialised

<sup>2</sup>BrE: manouever

<sup>3</sup>BrE: transport

<sup>4</sup>BrE: centimetres

<sup>5</sup>BrE: baths

<sup>6</sup>BrE: sport

<sup>7</sup>BrE: pavements

<sup>8</sup>BrE: lifts

<sup>9</sup>BrE: Toilets

With appropriate technology, some wheelchair users can drive cars, although getting in and out of a vehicle while in a wheelchair usually necessitates a portable ramp. Many cities have subway and bus systems that accommodate wheelchairs, and the list is growing. For example, Beijing updated its subway system for the 2008 Olympics, providing disabled riders there access to it for the first time.

In most developing countries, a major concern is not so much wheelchair accessibility as access to a wheelchair. Growing public awareness is contributing to less expensive types of wheelchairs being designed for specific environments—for example, chairs capable of maneuvering across dirt roads and rugged terrain but lightweight and compact so they can fold up to fit in crowded spaces, such as the aisle of a bus. These wheelchairs also must be affordable and constructed of locally available materials for easy repair.

The number of people needing a wheelchair is expected to increase by 22 percent<sup>10</sup> over the next decade, with most of the increase coming in developing countries, where fewer than 1 percent of those in need now have access to one.

*Answer the questions about Wheelchair-Accessibility Issues.*

### Questions 1–3

*Choose the correct letter, A, B, C, or D.*

1. In industrialized nations, disabilities are found more often among
  - older people.
  - children.
  - students.
  - injured people.
2. To be accessible to wheelchairs, buildings need
  - more compact curbs.
  - wider doors and corridors.
  - elevators on the exterior.
  - carpets in the interior.
3. Compact wheelchairs are
  - more unwieldy.
  - easier to use on a bus.
  - less affordable.
  - much wider.

<sup>10</sup>BrE: per cent

Complete the summary using words from the list below.

For people in wheelchairs, accessibility is an issue in most areas of their lives, whether they are at home or at school, working, or enjoying 4..... during their free time. In homes, things need to be arranged so that they can be reached by a person in a wheelchair. Counters, shelves, and 5..... need to be placed lower than usual, and 6..... must be built in place of the usual front steps. Public buildings also need to be arranged to allow access to people in wheelchairs. Transportation is also an issue. Many cities have 7..... their buses and subways so that it is easier now than it was in the past for people in wheelchairs to get around.

necessitated  
poverty

ramps  
recreation

slopes  
switches

terrain  
updated

### My Words

Write the words that are new to you. Look them up in the dictionary and write their definitions.

Words

Definitions

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_