

3 STEPS TO ORGANIZING A FRAGRANCE FREE EVENT

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Want to make your event accessible to people with chemical and fragrance sensitivities? Here are three steps to making that happen.

STEP 1: ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES

Decide what accessibility measures you want to provide. Know that your choice will have an impact on all attendees. Be honest with yourself and your attendees. Choose the option you can commit to.

When deciding on accessibility measures, two things to consider are people and the environment. You'll be asking people to change their habits and products. What limitations do you put on smoking? What kinds of personal care products can you limit at the event? This process can be intimate. Be prepped to offer websites and articles as resources.

Environmental factors in an event space include air quality and building materials. Air quality refers to the amount of pollutants in the air. Do people smoke in the space? Was it used for events that used toxic supplies (painting, silk screening, etc)? Do those chemicals still linger? Assessing building materials refers to accessibility regarding the structure of the event space. Has it been painted recently? Does it have new materials that are still outgassing?

Here are three options for event accessibility. They are meant as helpful choices that make it easier for you to implement.

OPTION A – MOST ACCESSIBLE

- No Smoking at or near the event space throughout the entire event.
- Ask participants to not wear clothes that have been smoked in.
- No colognes, perfumes or essential oils.
- Ask participants to wear clothes that have not been exposed to perfumes, colognes or scented oils, laundry detergents or fabric softeners.
- Ask participants to refrain from using scented body and haircare products before or during the event.
- Fragrance free seating or space set aside.
- Air purifiers used to increase air quality.
- Building checked for issues like paint and outgassing materials. Other event space chosen if current one has recent chemical use.
- Remove offending chemical materials (air fresheners, chemical cleaners) from space at least two weeks before event, run air purifiers and open windows to help clear the air. Change the filters in air purifiers before using them around chemically sensitive folks.
- Clean with non-toxic cleaning products before event.

OPTION B – MODERATELY ACCESSIBLE

- No Smoking in the event space or within 25 feet of the event entrance.
- No cologne or perfume wearing.
- Fragrance free seating or space set aside.
- Air purifiers used to increase air quality.
- Building checked for issues like paint and outgassing materials. Other event space chosen if current one has recent chemical use.
- Remove offending chemical materials (air fresheners, chemical cleaners) from space at least one week before event.

OPTION C – LOW ACCESSIBILITY

- No Smoking in the event space or within 25 feet of the event entrance.
- No cologne or perfume wearing.
- Air purifiers used to increase air quality.
- Remove offending chemical materials from space (air fresheners, chemical cleaners).

STEP 2: LET ATTENDEES KNOW

Let your attendees know how accessible the event will be. Your online and offline publicity and marketing materials should communicate expectations to potential participants. Be specific about participant demands so people with fragrance and chemical sensitivities can trust that the organizers have put thought into accessibility.

Here are two sample write-ups.

OPTION A – MOST ACCESSIBLE

To provide a chemical and fragrance free event, we request that participants refrain from the following before or during the event: Smoking; Wearing colognes, perfumes or scented oils; and using chemical based laundry detergents or fabric softeners. We ask participants to wear something that has had limited exposure to the items above.

OPTION B – MODERATE TO LOW ACCESSIBILITY

Please refrain from wearing colognes, perfumes or other scented or chemical products to the event.

STEP 3: ENFORCEMENT PLAN

Create a plan for enforcing accessibility. Please don't let this task fall on attendees who have chemical or fragrance sensitivities. If you are inviting people with sensitivities to your event, it is important to be assertive and enforce the plan to ensure their safety and health.

This plan should include an effort before and during the event.

Your pre-event effort will include an assessment of the space and the implementation of any changes to the space. Remember to remove chemical materials, add air purifiers and add clear instructions for smokers. If you have created special seating or sections, clearly label them.

Decide what to do if someone breaks the rules. What if someone shows up wearing strongly scented products? What if someone smokes in a non-smoking area? How will you address concerns if they arise? Will people be asked to leave? To change? To wash up?

Knowing your answers in advance will ensure a better response in the moment.

During the event, monitor the smoking areas and any special seating or sections to make sure the plan is still working. Assign an accessibility coordinator who can keep track of these things so it doesn't get lost in the shuffle.

Enforcement is key to making this plan and your event as accessible as possible.