

IDEA+™

IDENTITY + DESIGN + EXPERTISE + ADVANTAGE

THE 5 SENSES ASSESSMENT

A practical assessment for examining how sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste shape participation in an event, workplace, business, or professional environment.

Small details. A bigger welcome.

dis + ADVANTAGE™

We deal with serious subjects without a solemn attitude.

SIGHT + SOUND

Begin with what people are asked to see and hear. Consider intensity, predictability, alternatives, and whether participation depends on tolerating unnecessary sensory load.

● SIGHT

LIGHTING • VISUALS • MOVEMENT • PHOTOGRAPHY

- ☐ Can lighting intensity be adjusted, or are lower-light options available?
- ☐ Is flash photography eliminated or clearly communicated in advance?
- ☐ Are presentations, signs, menus, and digital displays easy to read with adequate contrast and legible type?
- ☐ Are rapidly changing visuals, flashing screens, strobes, or highly animated displays necessary?
- ☐ Can a participant move away from visually intense areas without losing access to the experience?
- ☐ Are entrances, exits, restrooms, quiet spaces, and key destinations clearly marked?
- ☐ Does the environment contain avoidable visual clutter that makes orientation or concentration more difficult?

● SOUND

VOLUME • ACOUSTICS • COMPETING NOISE • QUIET

- ☐ Is background music necessary, and can its volume be reduced when conversation or instruction is taking place?
- ☐ Are microphones and audio systems clear enough that participants do not have to strain to hear?
- ☐ Are captions, transcripts, or another text-based option available when appropriate?
- ☐ Is there a genuinely quiet space away from conversation, doors, equipment, and other recurring noise?
- ☐ Can participants hear the program from an alternate space if they need to leave the primary room?
- ☐ Have sudden sounds, alarms, applause cues, entertainment, or other high-volume moments been considered and communicated?
- ☐ Can someone use noise-reducing headphones or other sensory tools without that choice becoming a disruption or a spectacle?

SMELL + TOUCH

Some sensory barriers are easy to overlook because they are part of the environment rather than the program. This page examines air, fragrance, physical contact, temperature, materials, and space.

● SMELL

FRAGRANCE • AIR QUALITY • FOOD • PRODUCTS

- ☐ Is the environment free from strong added fragrances where possible?
- ☐ Are air fresheners, diffusers, heavily scented cleaning products, or fragranced decor necessary?
- ☐ Is ventilation adequate for the size and use of the space?
- ☐ Can food preparation, catering aromas, smoke, or other strong smells migrate into program areas?
- ☐ Have flowers, candles, personal-care products, and promotional scent experiences been considered as potential sensory inputs?
- ☐ Is there an alternate area for someone who needs distance from a strong scent?

● TOUCH

TEMPERATURE • TEXTURE • CONTACT • PHYSICAL SPACE

- ☐ Is the temperature comfortable, and is there a practical way to adjust or relocate when needed?
- ☐ Are seating options varied enough to account for different bodies, mobility needs, and comfort requirements?
- ☐ Are lanyards, wristbands, badges, linens, seating materials, and other required touchpoints reasonably comfortable?
- ☐ Can someone decline a handshake, hug, touch-based activity, or other physical contact without social penalty?
- ☐ Is there enough space to move, regulate, tic, reposition, or use a mobility device without being crowded?
- ☐ Are registration lines, networking areas, and transitions designed to reduce unnecessary physical congestion?
- ☐ Can someone choose a seat near an exit or with additional personal space without having to justify the choice publicly?

TASTE + DESIGN

Food and beverage decisions are part of experience design. The final questions help you move from noticing sensory inputs to making deliberate design decisions.

● TASTE

FOOD • BEVERAGE • HYDRATION • CHOICE

- ☐ Are ingredients and major allergens clearly identified?
- ☐ Are options available for common dietary needs without requiring someone to make a public explanation?
- ☐ Is water easy to access throughout the experience?
- ☐ Are food and beverage areas arranged to reduce crowding and long waits?
- ☐ Are there choices in texture, temperature, flavor intensity, and portion where practical?
- ☐ Can a participant bring or consume something different when the provided options do not work for them?
- ☐ Are food-centered activities optional when participation in the larger experience does not require them?

FROM ACCOMMODATION TO ANTICIPATION

- What sensory friction did this assessment reveal?

- What can be changed before the next person has to ask?

- What can become a standard option rather than a special request?

- Where could technology create another way to participate?

- What information should be communicated in advance so people can make informed decisions?

- Who needs responsibility for carrying these decisions into the actual experience?

ART™ FRAMEWORK: ANTICIPATION | REMOVE FRICTION | THOUGHTFUL DESIGN