A Day in the Life of a Wheelchair User

Materials
- Large pieces of cardboard
- String
- Pushpin
- Black marker
- Knife or scissors for cutting cardboard

Wheelchair Option
If a wheelchair can be obtained, conduct the activities below without using cardboard cutouts. Check with your local Services for Independent Living (SIL) to see if a wheelchair can be borrowed for educational use. For SIL locations in Missouri, see http://www.silcolumbia.org/cil.htm; outside of Missouri, do a search for “Independent Living Services”+your state.

Instructions

1. Create a cardboard circle that is 5 feet in diameter, the recommended space for turning a wheelchair around. Move the circle around to see if the room you currently inhabit is wheelchair accessible.

To make the circle, securely tie a black marker to a piece of string. Once this has been done, measure 5 feet from the marker and cut the string. Pin the end of the string to the cardboard to serve as the center point of the circle. Pull the string out and carefully draw a circle with the marker.

Is there enough space within the room for a wheelchair to successfully turn in a circle?

2. Make a cardboard cutout that is 30 x 48 inches, the minimum clear floor space needed to operate a wheelchair. Could a wheelchair easily move through doorways?

3. Make a cardboard cutout using the dimensions shown in the third diagram.
4. Using the cardboard cutouts, move them around the room you are currently in to see if it is wheelchair accessible.

Would a wheelchair have space to make a 5 feet complete turn? Could a wheelchair fit through doorways? Would a wheelchair be able to complete a 3-point turn and reverse its direction?