Living room and lounge *layout clearances*

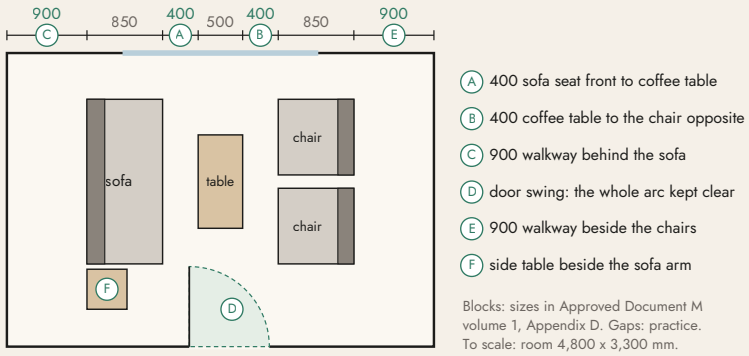
Gaps for sofas, coffee tables and walkways, which are practice and which are Approved Document M figures, an example plan to scale, and conversation distances for three kinds of group.

Compliance guidance. Approved Document M figures are quoted from the editions named (volume 1, 2015 incorporating 2016 amendments; volume 2, 2015 incorporating 2020 and 2024 amendments; England), read on 6 November 2026; BS 8300-2:2018 was not read. Every other gap is a practice range, not a rule. Guidance, not legal advice: the access consultant, the fire engineer and building control decide how the regulations apply to a layout.

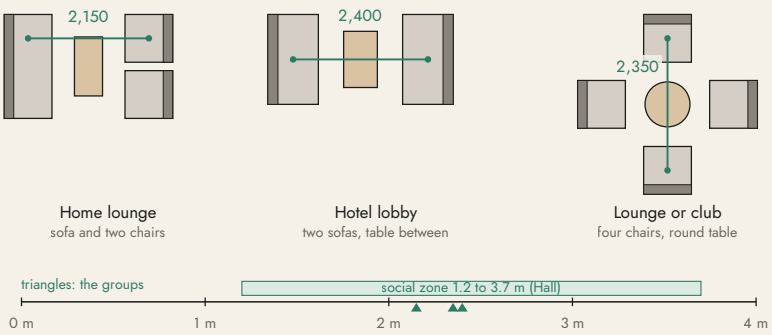
AT A GLANCE

Gap	Typical range or figure, mm	Basis	Note
A Sofa seat front to coffee table edge	350 to 450	Practice	Room for knees and to stand. Table top level with or below the seat (table heights sheet).
B Coffee table to the seat opposite	350 to 450	Practice	As A.
Between facing sofas, seat front to seat front	table depth + 700 to 900	Practice; our sum	Two gaps of 350 to 450 plus the table: 1,300 to 1,500 with a 600 mm table.
C Walkway behind a floating sofa, or between seating and a wall	750 to 900	Practice	Wider where trays are carried or a wheelchair passes.
E Main route through the room	900 to 1,200	Practice	Part M corridors are 1,200 clear: a lounge is not a corridor, but the route to a door may be one.
Corridor or passageway, accessible route (buildings other than dwellings)	1,200 clear; passing places 1,800 x 1,800 where under 1,800 wide	Part M vol. 2, 3.14(b), (c)	Columns, radiators and the like must not project into the clear width.
Door, effective clear width, straight-on	800 (new); 750 (existing)	Part M vol. 2, Table 2	External doors of buildings used by the public: 1,000 (new).
Reception counter: clear space in front	1,200 deep x 1,800 wide with a knee recess of 500; else 1,400 x 2,200	Part M vol. 2, 3.6(d)	Plus one counter section at least 1,500 wide, top no higher than 760, knee recess 700 (3.6(e)).
Wheelchair user dwelling: living room turning space	1,500 x 1,500 circle or 1,400 x 1,700 ellipse	Part M vol. 1, Appendix D, 3.20	On a furnished 1:100 layout using the Appendix D sizes.
Conversation: distance between people	social zone 1,200 to 3,700	Hall, via a reference article	Not a rule; varies with culture. Not seat to seat.

Millimetres. 'Practice' means a range designers use, with no source we could read. Part M figures are from the editions named in the notice, England only.



A lounge in plan, 4,800 x 3,300 mm: sofa, coffee table and two chairs with the gaps lettered A to F. Blocks use the Approved Document M volume 1 Appendix D sizes; gaps are practice. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio, to scale.



Seat centre to seat centre, mm: blocks from Approved Document M volume 1, Appendix D; gaps as shown.

Three seating groups at one scale, with the seat-centre distance of each and Hall's social zone marked. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio, to scale.

BLOCKS AND GAPS IN THE PLAN

Blocks are the Approved Document M volume 1, Appendix D sizes (mm): three-seat settee 850 x 1,850; armchair 850 x 850; coffee table 500 x 1,050; occasional table 450 x 450. They are test blocks, not products. Gaps A 400, B 400, C 900, E 900 are practice. Across the room: 900 + 850 + 400 + 500 + 400 + 850 + 900 = 4,800 mm.

PART M FIGURES IN BRIEF (ENGLAND)

Volume 2: reception counter clear space 1,200 x 1,800 with a 500 knee recess, or 1,400 x 2,200 without (3.6(d)); counter section 1,500 wide, top 760 at most (3.6(e)); corridors 1,200 clear, passing places 1,800 x 1,800 under 1,800 wide (3.14); door 800 clear straight-on (Table 2). Volume 1: living-room turning circle 1,500 x 1,500 or ellipse 1,400 x 1,700 on furnished layouts for wheelchair user dwellings (Appendix D, 3.20). BS 8300-2:2018 not read.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

LAYOUT DRAWING NOTE

Furniture layout drawing [ref] at 1:[50], showing every piece at its actual footprint including arms, backs and any overhang; the clear gaps A [400] and B [400] mm and C [900] and E [900] mm dimensioned as minimums; every door leaf and its swing arc; and the delivery route. Gaps are minimums unless marked otherwise.

CLEARANCES SCHEDULE

Minimum clear gaps (mm): sofa seat front to coffee table [350]; coffee table to opposite seat [350]; walkway behind or beside seating [750]; main route through the room [900]. Where the layout is to show compliance with Approved Document M [volume 1 / volume 2] paragraph [ ], the accessible route [1,200] mm clear and the turning space [1,500 x 1,500 / 1,400 x 1,700 ellipse] are shown on the plan.

MOCK-UP BEFORE PRODUCTION

Before production the partner is to mark out the layout full size on the floor, using the real footprints of [sofa], [armchairs] and [tables], for the designer's approval of the gaps, with the door arcs marked.

TERMS USED

Seat-centre distance
The distance between the centres of two seats, used here to compare the spread of seating groups. It is not the distance between people, which is what proxemics measures.

Turning space
Clear floor, drawn as a circle or an ellipse, in which a wheelchair user can turn in a single movement. Part M volume 1 gives 1,500 x 1,500 mm (circle) or 1,400 x 1,700 mm (ellipse) in its furniture schedule.

Effective clear width (door)
The width of a doorway measured at right angles to the wall from the door stop on the closing side to any obstruction on the hinge side, including projecting door furniture (Approved Document M volume 2, Diagram 9).

Proxemics
The study of how people use distance between themselves. Edward T. Hall's four zones (intimate, personal, social, public) are the usual reference for how far apart people sit in conversation.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- Approved Document M, Volume 2, 2015 edition incorporating 2020 and 2024 amendments (England): 3.6, 3.14, Table 2, 4.3; read 6 Nov 2026.
- Approved Document M, Volume 1, 2015 edition incorporating 2016 amendments (England): 3.20, Appendix D; read 6 Nov 2026.
- BS 8300-2:2018: Current on BSI Knowledge, 6 Nov 2026; not read.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/living-room-layout-clearances. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.