

TIPS ON BLINDNESS

1. Talk and act naturally when with a blind person. ALWAYS give your name and that you are a volunteer.
2. Do not patronize blind persons; they are just “regular people” more than you realize.
3. Be frank. If a blind man or woman needs to button a shirt or blouse, or close a zipper, please point this out in private.
4. If you see a blind person who may need assistance, do not hesitate to offer your services by saying “May I help you?”
5. Remember not to point when directing a blind person. Give directions in terms of “straight ahead,” or “to your right,” etc.
6. Do not push a blind person ahead of you. Allow a blind person to take your arm.
7. Use the “sighted guide” technique. Allow the individual to take the back of your elbow and walk slightly behind you. When he/she holds your elbow, and your elbow is held close to the rib cage, he/she gets a great deal of information about your movement. The movement of your body will inform him/her as to whether he/she should step up or down, right or left. Do not be afraid to let the individual grasp your elbow. Remember, blindness is not contagious.
8. Be alert but restrained. Do not startle a blind person needlessly. Think however, to mention such things as a projection, slippery surface, or the proximity of something hot.
9. When guiding a person through a doorway, move your guiding arm further to the rear and behind you. Remember then he/she is to one side of your body and allow for this rather than ramming him/her into the door-jamb, which can be painful and may cause injury.
10. If the person is using a dog-guide, he/she may drop the harness handle to let the dog know it is temporarily off-duty and take your arm. Otherwise, he will continue to use the dog and depend on your verbal directions. In such cases, please walk slightly behind and to the right of the person.
11. Pause at a curb, doorway, stairs, etc. to indicate the approach to something which differs from unimpeded walking. Mention the nature of the obstacle and always approach it directly rather than on an angle.
12. Acknowledge a blind person’s questions verbally, since he/she cannot see a head shake or gesture.
13. Never take advantage of a blind associate by communicating with a third person by motions or sign. It is rude and in poor taste.
14. Remember to shake hands when meeting or leaving a blind person. To him/she, it is as expressive as a smile.
15. Don’t let a blind person’s hand dangle in the air. If obviously it is his/her purpose to shake hands, grasp his/her hand and greet him/her.
16. Don’t offend a blind person by addressing him/her through a third party, such as asking a husband or wife if the blind spouse likes cream in their coffee. Speak directly to the blind person.
17. Don’t shout to a blind person as if he/she were deaf. Converse with him/her in a normal tone of voice.

18. Don't avoid using the words "see," "blind," or other words similar import. Use your normal vocabulary in a natural, easy manner.
19. Don't exclaim "wonderful" or "marvelous" simply because a blind person can do usual things such as telling time or identifying coins by touch.
20. When assisting a blind person into a bus, either enter the bus first and let the blind person follow; or put the blind person in contact with the rail inside the door and allow him/her to enter the bus without further assistance.
21. Identify yourself with a casual greeting when entering a room occupied by a blind person.
22. Indicate departure from a room, which is occupied by a blind person so that he/she will not find himself/herself talking to an empty room.
23. When introducing persons to a blind individual, make certain that names are pronounced distinctly. Nothing is so aggravating as not to know to whom one is talking.
24. When introducing another person to a blind person, give the blind individual some indication of the location so that he/she will know in what direction to turn his/her head and extend his/her hand.
25. In conversation, address the blind person by name if he/she is the one expected to reply. Otherwise he/she may not know the remark is being directed to him.
26. When eating, tell the blind person what is on the dish or plate.
27. Do not pass things across the front of the blind person. Expect him/her to share in passing of food or other items.
28. Assisting a blind diner can be facilitated by using a clock system to tell him/her where things are. For example: potatoes at 6 o'clock, salt and pepper shakers above 12 o'clock, etc. If the individual does not seem to understand, ask him/her how you can best help him/her.
29. If you refill his/her coffee cup, be sure to tell him. Otherwise he/she may get a very uncomfortable burn from coffee which was cool the last time he/she took a sip.
30. When helping seat a blind person at a table, guide him/her to the chair and place his/her hand on the chair-back. Then let him/her seat himself/herself.
31. Allow the individual to do everything he/she is capable of doing for himself/herself.
32. If the person has a dog-guide is in harness it is working and it would be inappropriate for you to pet or talk to the dog unless the blind person drops his/her hand from the harness and permits you to pet or speak to the dog.
33. Remember that when the dog-guide is in harness it is working and it would be inappropriate for you to pet or talk to the dog unless the blind person drops his/her hand from the harness and permits you to pet or speak to the dog.
34. The blind person has received extensive training in handling and giving commands to the dog, and the dog has been trained to serve its master. Commands given to the dog-guide by a person other than the master can be confusing and dangerous. Talk to the person not the dog.
35. Refer to the dogs as "dog-guides". It is the generic term for dogs trained at any number of special schools.

36. Some individuals who are legally blind may not use a cane or a dog-guide and have some usable vision for traveling, reading or recognizing people. They may, however, need your assistance to read a sign, cross a street, or read a menu in dim light.
37. Be aware that many people with limited vision can have their vision adversely affected by glare.
38. When writing something for a person with low vision, do so in large print using a dark heavy marker if possible, so he/she can read it more easily.
39. When assisting a blind person in signing his/her name, place a pen in his/her hand then guide it to the line. You may use a signature guide or the edge of a piece of heavy paper to show him/her the direction of the line. Do not be concerned if the signature is not exactly on the line.
40. Relax. Remember that assisting blind people is rewarding as well as challenging at times. Do your best, use care, and don't be afraid of making mistakes. By all means, don't forget your sense of humor. Most of those you offer assistance to will want to share that with you.
41. Remember relax and have fun.