

7 | Tips for Interacting with People Who are Blind or Visually Impaired



Did you know there are many degrees of blindness? For example, some people may see clearly but only in a very limited field; others may be able to see only light, shapes and color; still others may have no vision at all. Working with a guide dog can give people with a range of vision impairments greater independence, safety and mobility.

- 1 People who are blind don't necessarily need assistance, but **if someone appears to need help, feel free to offer**. Just be sure to identify yourself and communicate verbally. For a person who can't see, being touched or grabbed unexpectedly can be frightening.
- 2 When providing directions, face the same way as the person you're helping and **explain where to go using specific words**: For example, "When the carpet changes to tile floor, you'll be at the end of the hallway. Then turn right."
- 3 When you're talking to someone who is blind, they'll likely look in the direction of your voice. **You can look back at them, as you would a sighted person**.
- 4 **Keep your voice at a normal, conversational volume**. They may not be able to see you but that doesn't necessarily mean they can't hear you.
- 5 **Feel free to use the words "look" and "see"** — people who are blind use them all the time.
- 6 **Before you leave the presence of someone who is blind, let them know**, so they don't end up talking to themselves.
- 7 **A guide dog wearing a harness is working, and you should never interact with it** — including petting, talking to, or making eye contact. Distracting a working dog can put its handler's safety at risk.



Did you find these tips helpful? Share them with your friends and family, too! The more people understand about blindness, the more accessible, inclusive, and accepting our world will be.