



The Seeing Eye®

Tips for Interacting with People Who are Blind or Low Vision



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 greater independence, safety and mobility.

1. A person who is blind may not realize you are there if you don't announce yourself. When passing by a blind person or entering a space they are in, a friendly hello is the way to go. If you and the person know each other, it's best to identify yourself by name.
2. **If you think someone who is blind needs assistance, feel free to offer, but respect the answer if it is "no".** Just be sure to identify yourself and communicate verbally. For a person who can't see, being touched or grabbed unexpectedly can be frightening.
3. 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." If you are assisting someone with a guide dog, make sure that you are looking at and directing the person and not the dog. Eye contact with the dog will distract them from guiding efficiently when they should be taking direction from their handler.
4. 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.**
5. **Keep your voice at a normal, conversational volume.** Someone who is blind may not be able to see you, but it doesn't necessarily mean they can't hear you.
6. **Feel free to use the words "look" and "see"** — people who are blind use them all the time.
7. **Before you leave the presence of someone who is blind, let them know,** so they don't end up talking to themselves.
8. **A guide dog wearing a harness is working, and you should never interact with them—** including feeding, petting, talking to, or making eye contact. Distracting a working dog can put their 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.