

Vision Australia: www.visionaustralia.org.au

Tips for assisting people who are blind or vision impaired

* Approach, Ask, Assist.

- Approach: if you suspect someone may need a hand, walk up, greet them and identify yourself.

- Ask: "Would you like some help?" The person will accept your offer or tell you if they don't require assistance.

- Assist: listen to the reply and assist as required. Not all people who are blind or vision impaired will want assistance - don't be offended if your assistance is not required.

* Address people who are blind or vision impaired by their names so they know you are speaking to them.

* Let the person who is blind or vision impaired know that you have entered the room.

* Do not walk away from a person who is vision impaired without indicating that you are doing so - it is embarrassing and frustrating to talk to thin air.

* Let the person who is blind or vision impaired take your arm as described in the sighted guide fact sheet.

* In dangerous situations say "STOP" rather than "LOOK OUT"

* Do not relocate objects or furniture without telling the person who is blind or vision impaired.

* Do not fill glasses or cups to the brim.

* Use ordinary language when directing or describing and be specific. Do not point, or say "over there". Direct people who are vision impaired to their left and right, not yours.

* Use words like "look" and "see"; they are part of everyone's vocabulary. Otherwise both you and the person who is vision impaired will feel awkward.

* Describe the surroundings and obstacles in a person's pathway (remember to look up as well as down). Warn of the presence of overhangs, such as kitchen cupboards, jutting side mirrors of cars, or trees.

* Do not leave doors ajar. Close them or open them fully.

* Be aware that the person who is vision impaired will be disadvantaged about knowing what is going on. Therefore talk about what is happening.

* Ask people who are vision impaired what they want or need. Do not direct questions through their companion.

* If people who are vision impaired extend their hands to shake, do so.

* When seating people who are vision impaired, put their hands on the back of the chair and they will then be able to seat themselves.

Share our Vision

Vision Australia works in positive partnership with Australians who are blind, sighted or have low vision to pursue the opportunities they choose in life.