

Sighted Guide Safety and Proper Cane Handling

1. DO alert person to upcoming elevation changes or low hanging objects/branches.
 - If you notice curbs or stairs coming up, calmly alert the person that you will be approaching the stairs or curbs in approximately how many feet.
 - The guide should approach curbs, stairs and doorways squarely, never at an angle.
 - At doorways, the guide should tell the person being guided which way the door opens so the person being guided can hold the door as both pass through.
 - The guide should let the person know when they are approaching steps.
 - At steps, the guide should inform the person they are guiding whether the steps go up or down and how many steps there are.
 - Be aware of low hanging objects/branches on the path. Guide around these and/or alert the person so they have enough time to navigate around.
2. DO use descriptive language

Instead of:

This, That, and There

use



Descriptive language

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "This is where we keep the product."• "You can find it over <i>there</i>."• "Oh, it's over here." (pointing at product)• It's on <i>that</i> shelf." | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "The product is on the 2nd shelf from the top (tap the shelf or container if close by)."• "The product is to the left of the soda."• "The product is 2 feet to your right near your hip."• "The product is at your 3 o'clock (if there is an array)." |
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3. DO describe the layout of large rooms or areas.

When entering a large room or area with someone who is blind or visually impaired, a brief description of how the furniture is arranged or the layout of the area outside can make it easier for that person to navigate his or her surroundings. A description such as "The table is U-shaped and we're at the open end" or "The room is set up classroom style" works well.

Cane Handling

- Never raise the cane higher than the knee.
- Bring cane to a vertical position when standing still or turning as to avoid tripping someone by accident.



HUMAN GUIDE TECHNIQUES

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Human guide techniques provide easy and effective methods of assisting blind or low vision travelers with meaningful information. Many blind people are adept at traveling with a cane or a dog guide, but often appreciate assistance when walking through unfamiliar environments. Even proficient travelers will utilize human guidance on occasion to become familiarized with new areas, cross particularly complex streets, or maneuver through cluttered or congested areas.

The techniques described below can help you, the human guide, move more easily and comfortably when assisting a blind or low vision traveler. These descriptions can help, but will not make you proficient. Personalized training provided by a certified orientation and mobility specialist is the best way to learn the subtleties and adaptations needed for safe, efficient travel.

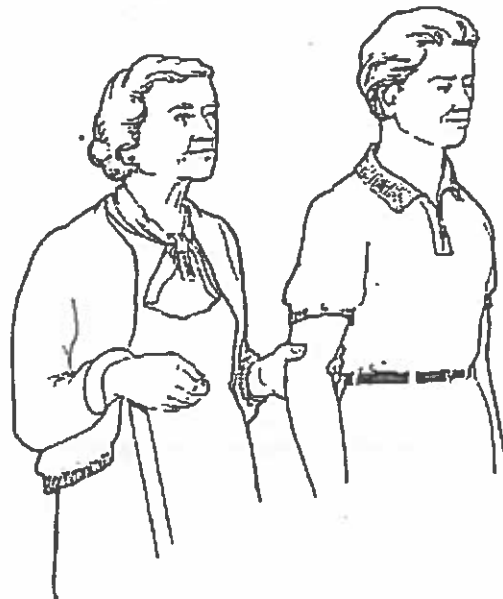
MAKING CONTACT

When approaching a blind person, introduce yourself and ask if the person would like assistance. If accepted, verbally offer your arm while brushing it against his or her arm.

GRASP

The blind person usually will grasp your relaxed arm near your elbow, with her fingers on the inside near your body and her thumb on the outside. The blind person's grasp must be firm enough to be maintained while walking, yet not so tight that it causes you discomfort. If the grip is too tight, say so. This technique will allow you flexibility and freedom of motion with both hands.

The standard grasp often is too high for children to reach, so have them grasp your wrist or hold your hand. This will be more comfortable for both of you.

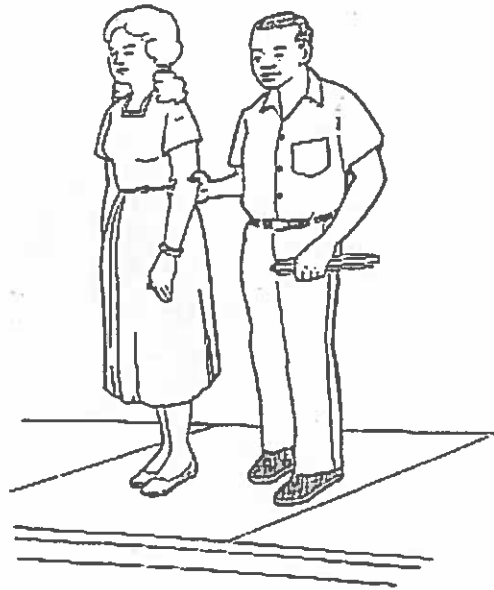


STANCE

Hold your arm relaxed, yet steady, at your side. The blind person's arm will bend at the elbow to a 90-degree angle and be held close to his side. He will walk a half-step behind you and to your side. The blind person will feel your movements and follow your relaxed guiding arm. There is no need to steer, push, or pull.

SUPPORT GRASP

Blind people who are frail, or who have balance problems, may not feel secure when using the standard grasp. Indeed, it may not provide them with enough support. In this case, rather than holding your arm near the elbow, a blind person may link his arm with yours. This will decrease the amount of space between you and will provide additional physical support. In order to accommodate a blind person's balance issues and your physical proximity to each other, you may need to slow your walking pace.



TAKING A SEAT

Approach chairs from the front. Inform the blind person that he is at a chair and slowly bring him forward until his knees or shin touch the seat. Place the hand of your guiding arm on the back of the chair. The blind person can locate the chair's back by following your arm down to the chair with the hand he has been using to grasp your arm.

Have the blind person seat himself. Unless you know that the person needs additional help, do not physically assist him or move the chair.

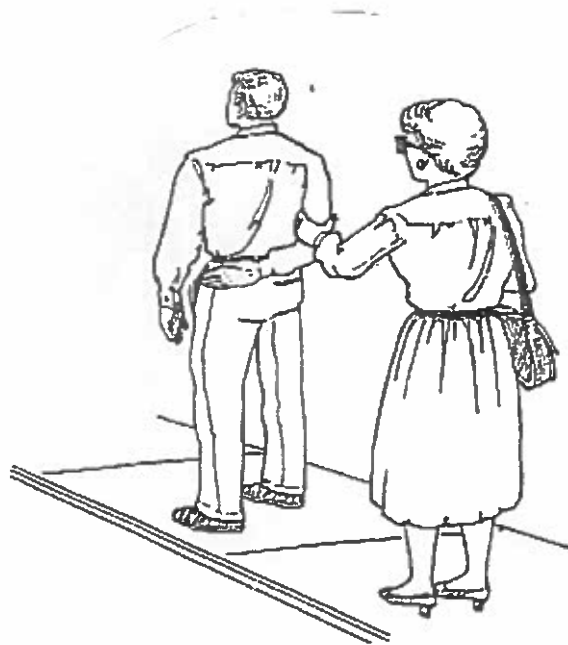
NARROW AREAS

When approaching a crowded or narrow area, such as a doorway, move your forearm and hand behind you so that they rest against the lower portion of your back. Your elbow will be bent at a 90-degree angle and your palm will face outward.

The blind person will take this cue and will move directly behind you at an arm's length, still maintaining a firm grip. You should take smaller steps and walk more slowly as you proceed through the narrow area.

For added comfort, you can have the blind person move her grasp further down your forearm to near your wrist.

After walking through the narrow passage, you can return your arm to the normal guide position and continue walking as before.

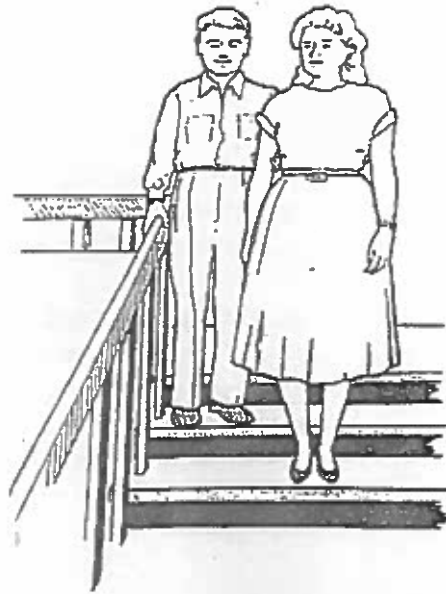


DOORS

When approaching a door, assume the narrow passage position and tell the blind person in which direction the door swings open. This information will allow the blind person to assist you by taking the door from you as he moves through. Do not attempt to turn around to hold the door open. This is awkward and diverts your attention.

STAIRS

Tell the person you are guiding that you are approaching stairs as you near within about six feet of the first step. Approach the stairs directly and in such a way that the blind person's free hand is closest to the rail. Tell the person you are guiding whether the stairs go up or down. Stop yourself at the first step and then guide the blind person forward to locate the first step and the railing. Always remain one step ahead and proceed as you would normally, keeping to the right-hand side of the stairs to avoid bumping into others on the stairway. Pause at each landing to allow the blind person to stand beside you and to know that there are no more steps, until you move forward to the next set of steps. Tell the blind person when you have reached the top or bottom of the stairs.



WHAT TO DO NOW

Sighted guide techniques are easy to learn and use. With proper training, you will be able to guide a visually impaired person in need of assistance. Family members and care providers interested in learning human guide techniques are welcome to contact Vista Center for individualized training. Instruction is provided by certified orientation and mobility specialists who can explain many aspects of blindness and low vision.
