



Blindness and Guide Dog Etiquette

Adapted from Guide Dogs for the Blind and New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

- Treat a person who is blind the same as you would anyone else. People who are blind do the same things sighted people do, just may use different techniques to accomplish those goals.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice and talk directly to the person, not to their guide dog or their companion.
- Don't be uncomfortable. You also don't have to avoid using the word "blind" around people who are blind.
- Be mindful when asking about causes of blindness. This is usually highly personal information.
- Do not pull on, steer, or grab a person who is blind.
- It is okay to use common, every words and phrases like "look," "see," or "watching TV." Many people who are blind use these words and phrases commonly.
- If someone looks as though they may need help, feel free to ask them. If a person is about to encounter a dangerous situation, voice your concerns in a calm and clear manner.
- Provide specific directions, such as "ten feet to the right," or "left at the next corner," instead of vague descriptions like "over there."
- Offer your elbow or arm for someone to hold as a way to guide a person through an environment that could be confusing or dangerous. It's okay if you're inexperienced as a human guide. You can always ask for tips on how to improve. Make sure if you're guiding a person who is blind that you let them know if they are coming up on a flight of stairs.
- Be considerate! If you notice something amiss with a person's clothing, accessories, body, mention it tactfully and/or privately.
- In a restaurant, offer to read the menu and receipt aloud (if possible). Be sure to describe the items and location of what is on the table. Never

assume that someone wouldn't want to order their own meal. When the food arrives, ask if the person would like to know where things are on the plate, and give specific descriptions, such as "the rice is at the top of the plate."

- Do not distract guide dogs while they're working. Ask to speak to, pet, or meet the dog while it is not working.
- Make sure you're not leaving obstacles in walkways.
- If a person who is blind is staying at your house, make sure you show them all the exits, bathrooms, closets, dressers, windows, and, yes, light switches.