



Best Practices Guide

Where do I start?

- Introduce yourself, “Hi, I’m”
- Ask rather than assume that help is needed
- Offer assistance such as human guiding or voice cues
- The Golden Rule applies: treat individual with respect and dignity

Human Guide Techniques

- Position yourself slightly in front of the person you are guiding.
- Touch the visually impaired person’s arm with your below on the side he/she prefers to use.
- He or she can then take your arm above the elbow.

Guiding Technique Best Practices

- Approach – The Guide should approach the person from the front and identify who they are and ask if assistance is needed.
- Handgrip – The Individual should take the Guide’s arm, just below the elbow.
- Stance – The Individual should walk one step behind the Guide.
- Pace – Walk at the pace of the Individual you are guiding. Slow at uneven surface, curbs, ramps, stairs, etc. and explain any changes you encounter.
- Stairs – Pause at beginning and end of the staircase and indicate if going up and down. Individual should use handrail and be sure the first step is located by the Individuals foot before going up or down. The Guide should always be one step ahead and describe any oddities about the staircase.
- Seating – Describe the chair. Does it rock or swivel? Is it unusually high or low? Does it have arms or not? What’s it made out of?
- Entering/Exiting a Vehicle – Describe the type of vehicle, location of seatbelts and where they are to be seated. The Guide should use hand against the top of the car to avoid accidental banging of head.
- Doorways – The Guide should indicate to the individual how the door opens.
- Narrow Passageways – When approaching a narrow space, the Guide should place the guiding arm behind their back and ask the Individual to behind the Guide. Slow walking pace and walk in single file. Describe situation as needed.

Interaction Do's and Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
Identify yourself when entering or exiting a room	Assume the individual will recognize your voice or hear you entering/exiting
Speak directly to the individual	Speak to everyone BUT the individual
Use regular speaking volume	Yell or exaggerate your speech
Establish a point of contact when leaving an individual alone	Leave an individual standing in "free space"
When in doubt, ask if assistance is needed. If "yes", ask if they would like to take your arm or prefer only voice cues.	Assume help is needed, grab the individual's arm or cane or touch the guide dog
Be specific with directions by using "left", "right" or clock orientation directions	Jaywalk or cross the street in an unsafe manner when guiding Point or use expressions such as, "It's over there"
Keep doors & cabinets completely closed	Leave doors ajar or move items or furniture around

Guide Dogs

Do's	Don'ts
Speak to the handler rather than the dog	Touch the dog without asking permission first (ideally, don't even ask!)
Respect that the dog is focused and working	Whistle or make sounds to distract the dog
Keep your own dog a distance away from a working dog	Offer a service dog food
Treat the handler with sensitivity and respect	Assume a napping service dog is off duty
Inform the handler if a service dog approaches you	Assume service dogs never get to 'just be dogs'
If being a human guide, ask if the individual prefers to be guided by your arm or prefers to follow you independently - as guide dogs are taught to "follow"	Correct the dog. It is the responsibility of the handler. If there's an issue that needs to be addressed about a dog's behavior, discuss it with the handler; she or he is the best person to resolve the issue.