



## Basic Etiquette: People with Visual Impairments

1. Blind doesn't mean blind--having a vision disability does not necessarily mean that a person lives in total darkness.
2. Saying Hello & Good-bye:
  - Don't assume that people with vision disabilities will remember your voice.
  - It is considered rude to ask a person with a visual disability, "Do you remember my voice?"
  - Identify yourself by name when you approach a person with a vision disability and tell them when you are leaving the conversation or area.
3. Communication
  - Use a normal tone of voice (for some reason, people with vision disabilities are often shouted at).
  - It is okay to use vision references such as see or look.
4. Orientation
  - It is considered polite to indicate your position with a light tap on the shoulder or hand.
  - However, keep your physical contact reserved.
5. Give a person with visual impairment a brief description of the surroundings. For example:
  - There is a table in the middle of the room, about six feet in front of you, or
  - There is a coffee table on the left side of the door as you enter.
6. Use descriptive phrases that relate to sound, smell, and distance when guiding a visually impaired person.
7. Mobility Assistance
  - Offer the use of your arm.
  - If your assistance is accepted, the best practice is to offer your elbow and allow the person with the vision disability to direct you.
  - Don't grab, propel, or attempt to lead the person.
  - Do not clutch the person's arm or steer the individual.
  - Walk as you normally would.
8. Do not be offended if your offer to assist a visually impaired person is declined.
9. Service Animals
  - Guide dogs are working animals and should not be treated as pets.
  - Do not give the dog instructions, play with, or touch it without the permission of its owner.
10. Avoid clichéd phrases such as "the blind leading the blind," "What are you... blind?" "I'm not blind, you know."
11. Do not grab or try to steer the cane of a person with visual impairments.
12. Always determine the format in which a person with visual impairments wants information.
  - The usual formats are Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer disk/electronic text.
  - Do not assume what format an individual uses or prefers.
13. Direct your comments, questions or concerns to the person with a visual impairment, not to his or her companion.

14. If you are reading for a person with a visual impairment:
- First describe the information to be read.
  - Use a normal speaking voice.
  - Do not skip information unless requested to do so.

## **Blind & Visually Impaired Resources**

Each state has a public agency to meet the needs of the blind and visually impaired. This agency is a component of the public Vocational Rehabilitation system. A listing of the agencies for the blind and visually impaired for all states and territories is available at the following web site: [www.nchrtm.okstate.edu/pages/state\\_VR.html](http://www.nchrtm.okstate.edu/pages/state_VR.html)

### **American Council of the Blind**

1155 15th Street N.W., Suite 720  
Washington, DC 20005  
Voice: (800) 424-8666; (202) 467-5081  
E-mail: [info@acb.org](mailto:info@acb.org)  
Web site: [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)  
State affiliates listed at: [www.acb.org/affiliates/index.html](http://www.acb.org/affiliates/index.html)

### **American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)**

11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300  
New York, NY 10001  
Voice: (800) 232-5463  
Fax: (212) 502-7777  
TTY: (212) 502-7662  
E-mail: [afbinfo@afb.net](mailto:afbinfo@afb.net)  
Web site: [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

### **The Library of Congress**

1291 Taylor Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20542  
Voice: (800) 424-8567; (202) 707-5100  
TTY: (202) 707-0744  
E-mail: [nls@loc.gov](mailto:nls@loc.gov)  
Web site: [www.loc.gov/nls](http://www.loc.gov/nls)

### **The Lighthouse Information & Resource Service**

111 East 59th Street  
New York, NY 10022  
Voice: (800) 829-0500  
Fax: (212) 821-9707  
TTY: (212) 821-9713  
E-mail: [info@lighthouse.org](mailto:info@lighthouse.org)  
Web site: [www.lighthouse.org](http://www.lighthouse.org)

### **National Braille Press**

88 St. Stephen Street  
Boston, MA 02115

Voice: (617) 266-6160; (800) 548-7323  
Fax: (617) 437-0456  
E-mail: [orders@nbp.org](mailto:orders@nbp.org)  
Web site: [www.nbp.org](http://www.nbp.org)

### **National Federation of the Blind**

1800 Johnson Street  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Voice: (410) 659-9314  
E-mail: [epc@roudley.com](mailto:epc@roudley.com)  
Web site: [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)  
State chapters listed at: [www.nfb.org/chapsite.htm](http://www.nfb.org/chapsite.htm)  
Professional divisions listed at: [www.nfb.org/nfbdvlst.htm](http://www.nfb.org/nfbdvlst.htm)

### **Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic**

The Anne T. MacDonald Center  
20 Roszel Road  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
Voice: (800) 221-4792; (609) 452-0606  
E-mail: [custserv@rfd.org](mailto:custserv@rfd.org)  
Web site: [www.rfd.org](http://www.rfd.org)

### **Sensory Access Foundation**

1142 West Evelyn Avenue  
Sunnyvale, CA 94086  
Voice: (408) 245-7330  
Fax: (408) 245-3762  
TTY: (408) 245-1001  
Website: [www.sensoryaccess.com](http://www.sensoryaccess.com)