

# Communicating effectively with individuals with visual impairment

# 1

## Identify yourself

Don't assume the person will recognize you by your voice. Describe yourself, if you are comfortable and your environment.

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## Be present and polite

Look at the person when talking with them. Speak naturally and clearly. Loss of eyesight does not mean loss of hearing. Talk directly to the person. Do not talk through another person present.

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# 2

# 3

## Use accurate and specific language

Use accurate and specific language when giving directions. For example, "the door is on your left," rather than "the door is over there."

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## In a group setting

Introduce other people present and let the person know when you or someone else enters or leaves the room or conversation. Say the person's name when directing conversation towards them or asking a question.

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# 4

## Use non-verbal communication

Communicate responses along with non-verbal communication, such as when you nod your head or use a hand gesture. Continue to use body language. This will affect the tone of your voice and give a lot of extra information to the person who is vision impaired.

# 5

## When in doubt, ask



Do not touch the person without consent. Don't assume the person needs your assistance, if you think they might, ask. Ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask about the technology a person is using, how they complete a particular task, or modifications they may need during the assessment. This includes providing large print, Braille, or other formats for communication.

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# 6

## Relax and be yourself

Start conversations normally without immediately discussing their vision loss or how it affects their performance of tasks. Ask how the person identifies or refers to their disability. Use everyday language. Don't avoid words like "see" or "look" or talking about everyday activities such as watching TV or videos. You may use the words "blind," "visually impaired," or "disabled."

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# 7

## Avoid competing noise

If there are loud or distracting noises it may be disorienting or may not allow the person to focus on the conversation.

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# 8

## Resources

- National Federation of the Blind - [nfb.org/our-community/blind-parents](http://nfb.org/our-community/blind-parents)
- [Noisyvision.org](http://Noisyvision.org)
- Child Welfare Equity OWL page

