



10 top tips - meeting a person who is blind

There are a wide range of visual impairments, which affect people's sight in different ways, but the suggestions below should ensure you are helpful and respectful when meeting any visually impaired person.

1. Always identify yourself, especially when entering a room. This is not only polite, but also lets the visually impaired person know who has just walked in.
2. Use the person's name when addressing them. This lets them know you are speaking to them and not someone else in the room.
3. Be specific when giving directions. For example, say "The desk is five feet to your right", instead of "The desk is over there." Use phrases such as "straight ahead", "turn left", "on your right", rather than pointing and saying, "Go that way", or, "It's over there." If there are steps it is useful to say how many there are, the direction of them, and other helpful wayfinding information. For example, "there are 3 steps up, just in front of you, and a handrail to your left".
4. If you need to guide the person, let them take your arm - do not grab theirs. If you are guiding someone to a seat, place their hand on the back of the seat when standing, so they can orientate themselves to sit down. And remember - if you are leaving, then you need to let the person know!
5. Speak directly to the individual. Do not speak through a companion, and don't shout. The person may not be able to see, but their hearing is usually fine.
6. Don't worry about using words like "blind" or "see". It's okay to say, "see you later" to someone who is blind.
7. Try to sit/stand in a well-lit area. Many visually impaired people have some degree of sight, so they may for example be able to see your outline if you stand in a well-lit area, but find it more difficult if you are standing in shadows or a dimly lit room.
8. If the person has a guide dog, ask if there is anything the dog needs e.g. water
9. If you know a few days in advance that you are meeting with a visually impaired person, you may need to get some documents transcribed for them into Braille, Audio or Large Print so they have independent access to your printed material. A2i can help you with this, and we can also produce tactile maps for you, so your visitor has an understanding of the layout of the building or site.
10. Do not assume a person is unable to do something, simply because they are blind. This can not only be hurtful to people, but can also be discriminatory.