

Kerbs

Approach kerbs or other drop-offs squarely. When you reach the edge of the kerb, stop. This alerts your partner to a change in the ground surface. You should tell your partner whether you are about to step down or up. When you step down stop again, then walk forward.

Getting into a car

Your partner should be on the side closest to the car. Place your hand on the door handle and tell them which way the car is facing. Your partner slides their hand down the guide's arm to the door handle, opens the door, and finds the edge of the roof with their free hand to avoid bumping their head. They can then locate the back of the car seat. Once seated, your partner can then close the door.

If the car door is already open, instead of placing your hand on the door handle, place your hand on the top corner of the open door and then proceed as before.

Guide dogs

All principles of sighted guide can be applied to the owner with a guide dog. The key point to remember is the guide dog is not guiding when the owner accepts being guided.

When walking with a guide dog take up the guiding position on the opposite side to the guide dog (generally right side). When offering sighted guide the guide dog owner will generally release the handle on the dog and use the leash.

Guide dogs are trained to work on the 'follow' command, which means they can also follow the guide.

Do not touch or distract the guide dog when it is working. It is not safe for a guide dog and their owner to travel on a moving escalator or travelator unless they have been taught to do so.



How to guide people

The Royal Society for the Blind

 Adaptive Technology

 Employment Services

 Mobility Services

 RSB Guide Dog Service

 Low Vision Centre

 Understanding Eye Conditions

 RSB General Services

 Community Services

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The Royal Society for the Blind

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The Royal Society for the Blind



How to Guide People

The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) is the main source of assistance for South Australians who are blind or vision impaired.

One of the most useful ways in which a sighted person can assist a person who is blind or vision impaired is to learn to be a proficient sighted guide. Guiding a person who is blind or vision impaired is simple but takes some practice to develop confidence. Start your practice in a quiet level area before moving to more complex areas.



Describing surroundings

When describing surroundings, the most important information to give is about changes in the ground surface. Use language that is specific, i.e. use phrases like 'in front of you', 'behind you', and 'on your left' rather than a vague phrase like 'over there'. If you are facing the person be mindful that your left hand side is their right hand side and vice versa.

Most people try to give too much information when walking with a person who has a vision impairment for the first time. Try walking quietly, allowing your partner to gain confidence and take in information through their other senses.

Important Note

Not all people will use these methods. It is important that you ask the person if they would like help and, if so, what type of help they require.

Getting Started

Always ask the person first if they would like assistance

Stand slightly in front of your partner with your arm relaxed and by your side.

Ask the person to take your arm. It may be helpful to touch the back of their hand with your hand so that they can find your arm. They should hold your arm above the elbow using a C-grip.

By holding your arm this way they will be half a step behind you and slightly to your side. Walk at a pace that is comfortable for the person who is blind or vision impaired.

Narrow Spaces

While guiding your partner, you may encounter a narrow space such as a doorway, an aisle, or an opening through a crowd of people. Always tell your partner that you are approaching a narrow space.

So that your partner will walk behind you in single file rather than at your side, move the arm that your partner is holding to the middle of your back, keeping it straight. Your partner should step in behind you, still holding onto your arm. They should straighten their arm to avoid stepping on your heels.

When you have passed through the narrow space bring your arm back to your side. Your partner responds by returning to the position half a pace behind and slightly to the side of you.

Doorways

When negotiating a doorway, your partner should be on the same side as the door hinge. This may mean that you have to tell them to change sides. They should do this by moving behind you while maintaining contact.

When you are at the door tell your partner whether the door opens towards you or away from you. As you pass through the door, you and your partner may need to move in the narrow space position. You open the door and as you walk through your partner moves their free hand to the door, finds the door handle and closes the door behind them.



Stairs

When you approach stairs, tell your partner whether they go up or down. Approach the stairs squarely and stop when you reach the edge of the stair. If your partner is not on the side of the handrail, tell them and let them change sides if they wish to hold on to the rail. You may need to guide their hand to the rail. Some people who are blind or vision impaired like to slowly slide one foot to the edge of the stair to gauge

the distance before moving. Allow them time to do this. If you are unsure, ask your partner if they are ready.

You should always be one step in front of the person on the flight of stairs. Try to walk at an even pace so a rhythm develops and balance is maintained.

When you reach the end of the stairs, stop. Allow your partner to negotiate the last step. Then tell your partner there are no more stairs.



Seating

Place your guide hand on the back of the chair. It is helpful to tell your partner where they are standing in relation to the chair and whether it has arms or is a swivel chair.

Your partner slides their hand down the guide's arm to the chair-back, and seats themselves. You can also place your hand underneath your partners arm to guide their arm across to the chair.

From there most people can manage for themselves.

