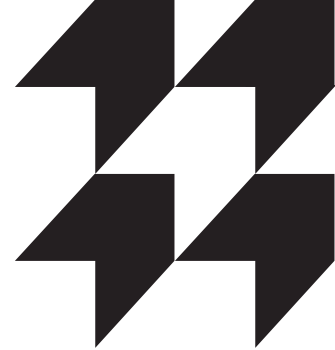


Guide Dogs.

Creating an inclusive hospitality service.

Tips for assisting people
with low vision or blindness.





Contents

Tips for assisting people with low vision or blindness.	1
Offering assistance.	4
Did you know?	5
What should I do when I see a Guide Dog or need to interact with their Handler?	6
Orientation and descriptive language.	7
Guiding.	8
Ensuring information is accessible.	10
Contact us.	11

Acknowledgement of Country.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



“

Food and dining out hold a significant place in Australian culture. Most life events are celebrated over food, and we often socialise and work with a coffee in hand. I want to feel comfortable to participate in these experiences just like everyone else.



Dining out often comes with additional challenges for me. I often have multiple worries before my journey starts, such as whether I will get to the venue safely, wondering whether they will attempt to refuse me with my Guide Dog, if the ordering, serving and payment process will be accessible and whether the acoustics of the venue will allow me to follow a conversation with my friends.

There are very simple things that you can do that will allow me to walk away from my dining experience, feeling I've been treated with dignity and respect.



I am excited about sharing tips in this brochure for including people like me. I want to feel welcome. I want to ensure that you are meeting your obligations as an inclusive service so that our wonderful diverse community also benefits from dining experiences that are so important to Australia's culture. Good access means business.”

Dan Searle

Community Mobiliser,
Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

Offering assistance.

People who are blind or have low vision have the same need to access the community and services as anyone else. Although most of the time they will have the skills and ability to do this independently and confidently, there may be times when they require support.

You should always check if assistance is required before you provide it. If a person looks confident and is travelling along with a sense of purpose, they are probably okay.

To offer assistance, we suggest that you apply the 'AAA' strategy, which stands for: Approach, Ask and Assist.

Approach

- Approach the person.
- Identify who you are, including your name, even if you've met the person before.
- It could also be helpful to add your role.

Ask

"Would you like any assistance?"

"Do you need a hand?"

Assist

If your offer is accepted, it is time to ask "how". Determine the assistance they require and the best way to do so. You might be asked to provide guiding support, offer directions, describe the space, or provide other helpful information.

“

Assisting someone doesn't have to be hard or daunting. A simple 'hi, how are you? My name is... can I lend a hand?' is a very useful strategy in the vast majority of situations. Then just listen to the person and be guided by them instead of making assumptions.”

Harrison, Client of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT



Did you know?

- Only a small percentage of people see nothing at all.
- Not all conditions that cause low vision or blindness are obvious, so do not attempt to guess a person's level of vision.
- People with low vision or blindness do not automatically have heightened senses, such as enhanced hearing. Using the other senses is a learned skill that can be further developed through specific training.



What should I do when I see a Guide Dog or need to interact with their Handler?

To help our Guide Dogs focus on their work and keep the Handler safe, we ask that you:

- Do not pat a Guide Dog.
- Do not feed a Guide Dog.
- Do not distract a Guide Dog: do not talk to it, make eye contact or encourage physical contact.

People with Guide Dogs can sit anywhere in a café or restaurant that others can, including indoors. It's the law that people with Guide Dogs have access to the same spaces and services as anyone else.

Some tips for making a Guide Dog Handler feel welcome include informing them of the availability of a dog water bowl, and where tables outside of the main thoroughfare are so the dog stays protected from foot traffic.



Orientation and descriptive language.

A person who is blind or has low vision may request orientation or a description so they can:

- move around independently;
- know who else is in the space;
- locate people or destinations; and
- know what is on a plate at a cafe or in the immediate space in front of them.

Providing good orientation involves giving clear and precise directions and descriptions.

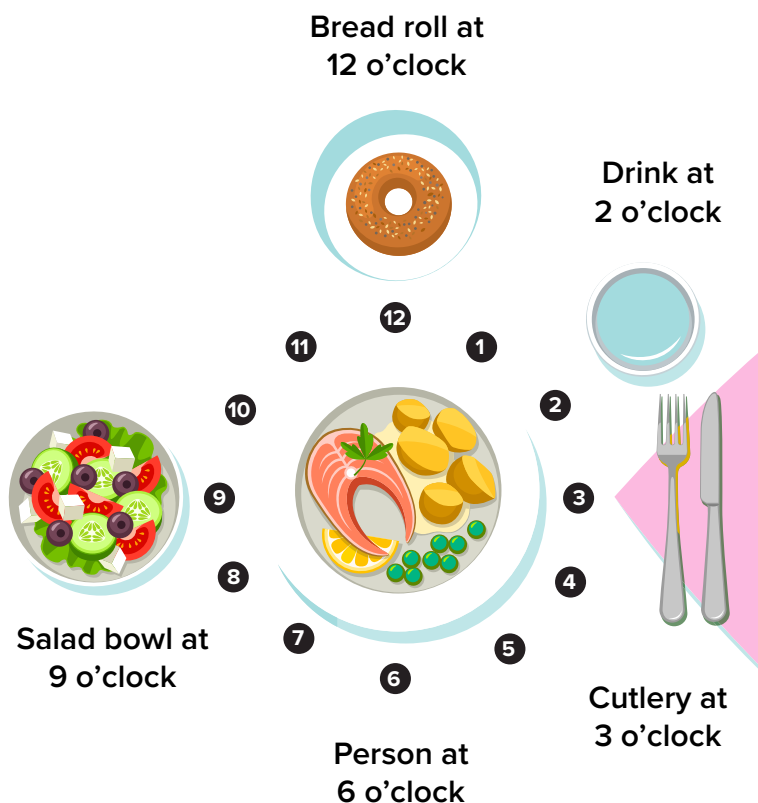
Some tips include:

- Don't point or use vague descriptions such as “the seat is over there” or gesture by solely pointing. Instead, use words such as on your right or left, in front or behind.
- Stand facing the same direction as the person you are assisting so that your left is the same as their left.

Clock face

Use the clock face method by giving directions from the point of view of the person facing 12 o'clock. Directions are then described relative to their location on the clock face. For example, “The entry to the meeting room is at 12 o'clock, and the stairs are directly to your right, at 3 o'clock.”

Clock face can also be used very effectively to describe food on a tray or items on a table.



Guiding.

People who are blind or have low vision sometimes require assistance to travel through a space or environment. Assistance may involve holding onto your arm, walking next to you, or following you.



If a person has asked to be guided while holding onto your arm, the following steps can be followed:

1. Ask which side they would prefer you to be on and whether they would like to hold your arm.
2. If the person would like to take your arm, touch the back of your hand to the back of their hand so they know where you are positioned. They will then be able to take hold of your arm, usually just above the elbow.
3. Confirm that the person is ready to go.
4. Start walking half a step-in front of the person, maintaining a comfortable pace for you both.

Remember, good communication is the key to being a good guide. If you're ever unsure about anything, just ask the person. Sometimes, the person may need to modify their grip, speed or position depending on their height and ability.

Considerations

- Ensure that there is enough space for the two of you to travel side by side.
- Look for any hazards in front of you both, including at ground and head height.
- Let them know if you need to make a change of speed or direction.

Narrow spaces

Tell the person that you are approaching a narrow space.

- Slow down and move your guiding arm behind you, placing your forearm across your lower back. The person will step behind you.
- Bring your arm back to the normal guiding position when you are through the narrow space and tell them it is all clear.

Stairs

- Let the person know that you are approaching stairs, slow down and say if the stairs go up or down, approximately how many stairs there are and if they have any unusual features, such as being shallow or irregular.
- Stop before the first step.
- Ask whether they would like to use the handrail, be guided, or both.
- If guiding, confirm they are happy to proceed, and then you walk one step ahead.
- Slow down or briefly pause on the final step and let the person know they have reached the last step.
- Continue guiding at a comfortable speed.



Ensuring information is accessible.

Accessing information remains a challenge for people with low vision or blindness, with many cafes and restaurants not offering information in a format that is accessible. This can affect access to menus, signage and websites, but can also be limited by the design of a product, such as EFTPOS terminals.



Some tips to improve access to information are:

- To display important information like menu items, prices, signage and safety information, use high contrast and simple style text. Use sans serif font styles and avoid cursive fonts that are hard to read. Arial font is a safe bet, as is black text on a white background. You may also offer to read the menu or important information to the customer if required.
- Allow flexibility with payment types. EFTPOS machines aren't always accessible, particularly those with touchscreens. A person may need to use cash or split payments, so that there is no need to enter a PIN.
- Ensure the information on your website or app is accessible to screen readers and customers with low vision or blindness. Learn about the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and aim to consult with and co-design your website with people with a disability to ensure it is accessible.
- Learn more about how to make information accessible via our online learning modules at learn.guidedogs.com.au.

“How do people
with blindness get
around the city?”



Learn more to
change more



Guide Dogs.
For a boundless world.






Contact us.

For more information about how to create an inclusive hospitality venue, visit nsw.guidedogs.com.au/access-means-business



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