

An introduction to sighted guiding

Sighted guiding is not specific to Guide Dogs; it is a way of escorting a person who has vision impairment in an efficient way, giving this person the feeling of moving in a safe and secure manner.

We encourage all volunteers to sign up to local My Guide training (training in sighted guiding) when it is run. Speak to your volunteer manager and/or main contact who can find out what courses are running in your area. The sighted guiding techniques shown here are part of what you will learn and practice on the course.

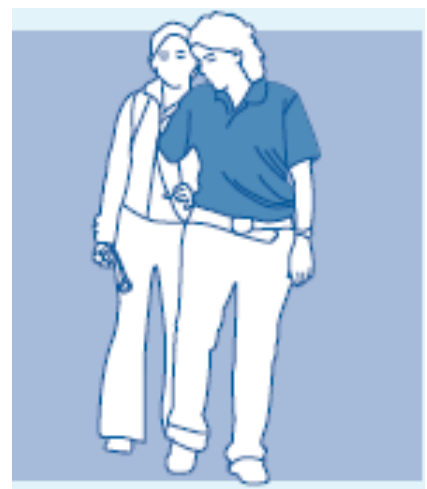
Approaching someone, and setting off

Introduce yourself, and offer help. If your offer is accepted, ask the person where they want to go, and if they would like to take your arm. Stand by their side, and let them hold your arm just above the elbow. Start walking, and they will follow about half a step behind.

If the person has a guide dog, approach from the side opposite the dog so they can use their free arm to take your left arm. Do not distract the guide dog from its work.

In a narrow space or busy area

Walk in single file. Straighten your guiding arm and move it to the middle of your back, and the person you're guiding will step in behind you. Walk more slowly.



Crossing a road

Say whether the kerb is a step up or step down, and pause before stepping so the person you're guiding can get ready. Once you have safely crossed, if you are parting from the person, describe to them where they are.



Going up or down stairs and steps

Say whether the steps go up or down. The person's free hand should be on the side with the handrail. Going up, pause to allow them to locate the bottom step, then proceed - they will be one step below you.



When you reach the top step, say so, and stop to let them find it with their foot.

Going down, make sure the person you're guiding has located the handrail and the edge of the top step. Stop and let them find the first step down with their foot before moving off. Walk one step ahead, and say when you reach the bottom.

Getting through doorways

Say whether the door opens towards or away from you, and to the right or left. Open the door with your guiding arm - as you walk through, the person you're guiding should hold it open, before following you through.

If they have a guide dog it may be best to open the door, let them go through, and join them on the other side.

Taking a seat

Describe what sort of chair it is, if it has arms, and whether there's a table in front. Place your guiding hand on the back of the chair, and allow the person you're guiding to slide their hand down to locate the back. They can then sit down.

With a row of seats, side step along together until the person is in front of their seat with the backs of their knees touching it. They will then sit.



Getting into a car

Place your guiding hand on the door handle and say if the car is facing left or right. The person you're guiding will slide their hand down your arm to find the handle. Use your guiding hand to indicate where the top of the door frame is, as they get in.



Getting on or off a bus or train

Tell the person you are guiding how high any steps are, and if there is a gap between the train and platform. Then guide the person as you step on or off, walking in front. Walk down aisles in single file.



General tips

- Warn of obstacles or hazards
- Describe surroundings - including changes in ground surface
- Don't overload the person you're guiding with information
- Remember to say "left" or "straight ahead", not "over there"
- Leave enough room around obstacles, and watch for those at head height as well as ground level.
- Never push or pull the person you're guiding.
- Say when you're leaving, so the person isn't left speaking to an empty space.
- A guide dog owner will indicate the need for assistance by letting the harness-handle lie on the dog's back.
- Never distract a guide dog, as this might put its owner in danger. And never take the lead or harness, or tell the dog what to do - only the owner should control it.
- Never feed a guide dog - they have a perfectly balanced diet and should only be fed by their owners.

If you want to know more...

Go to www.youtube.com and, in the search box, type 'guide dogs UK sighted guiding'.