

# Sighted guiding

GUIDE  
DOGS



How to guide people  
with sight loss

 My  
Guide

## Sighted guiding

### How to guide people with sight loss

**Sometimes, people with sight loss need a bit of help getting around – even if they have a guide dog or use a cane.**

Difficulties can be caused by unfamiliar places or crowded shops and stations, and also the environment in which we live – complex town centres and obstacles in the street, for example.

Learning a few simple sighted guiding techniques means we can all feel ready and confident to help if we're needed.

This leaflet describes a technique where the person you are guiding will be offered your arm to hold just above your elbow, however you should always ask how they wish to be guided, as some people may prefer to place a hand on your shoulder.

#### **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 around 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.



### **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 slower, giving information about any obstacles in the way.



### **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. If you are parting once you've crossed, describe 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 first step, then proceed – they will be one step below you.

When you reach the last 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 before you move. 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 can then take a seat more easily.



### **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.

### **When you leave**

Always check with the person you are guiding that they know where they are and that they're in a safe place before you leave. Tell the person clearly that you will be leaving them now.



## General tips

- Give instructions, warn of obstacles or hazards, and describe surroundings – including changes in ground surface – but 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 may indicate the need for assistance by letting the harness-handle lie on the dog's back.
- Never feed or 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.



**“With My Guide the sky is the limit.  
Where I want go and the things  
I want to do, I just take an elbow  
and the world opens up for me”**

Brian from Derbyshire



Sighted guiding is part of the My Guide service.

To find out more please call

**0345 143 0229**

Visit **[guidedogs.org.uk/myguide](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/myguide)**



This publication is available in Braille, large print, audio, electronic and text formats.

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