

Tips to Enhance Positive Interactions with the Blind and Visually Impaired

Checklist of Best Practices

- **Announce yourself clearly** when approaching or leaving a group that includes someone who is blind or visually impaired. Think “arrivals and departures” like at an airport.
- **Always ask before providing assistance.** Use respectful phrasing such as, “Would you like some assistance?” or “How can I help?”
- **Describe shared visual materials** aloud when they are not accessible—this includes handouts, slides, or other visual content.
- **Avoid playing “Guess Who?”** Do not approach a blind person and ask them to guess who you are. This is not only unhelpful, it can feel disrespectful.
- **Identify yourself before speaking** in group conversations so the person knows who is talking.
- **When asking a question in a group**, start by saying the name of the person to whom you’re directing your question.
- **Do not make assumptions** about what someone who is blind can or cannot do. Vision impairment exists on a spectrum. When in doubt, just ask.
- **Narrate group dynamics** during pauses. Since facial expressions and visual cues aren’t accessible, brief commentary can help:
“I’m thinking about what you said,” or “People are nodding in agreement.”
- **During virtual meetings**, clearly identify yourself when speaking and try to describe visual content that may be shared on screen.

Additional Helpful Tips from Accessibility Advocates

- **Respect personal space** and do not touch a person’s cane, guide dog, or arm without permission.
- **If guiding someone**, offer your arm rather than grabbing theirs. Allow them to set the pace.
- **Let the person know if you’re moving away** from a conversation or changing locations.
- **Use directional language** like “to your left” or “straight ahead” instead of vague terms like “over there.”
- **Ensure environments are free of unexpected obstacles**, especially in shared or public spaces.
- **Introduce new people in the room** by name and location to help with orientation.
It’s actually best if you invite each person to speak for themselves which allows for voice recognition and sound location.
- **Speak directly to the person**, not through a companion or guide.