

What?

- In the UK 360,000 people are registered blind or partially sighted and two million people live with sight loss.
- Guiding someone with a visual impairment is a big responsibility and can be a bit daunting at first, but with a bit of practice becomes second nature.
- Good sighted guiding involves effective communication between the two parties and can help the person being guided feel safe and get the best out of their day.



Why?

- Each person's experience of sight loss is different and there are no hard and fast rules on how to assist people who have a visual impairment. However, learning a few simple sighted guiding techniques means we can guide someone in a safe and respectful manner whilst supporting their independence. You can learn these skills through your volunteer induction and by attending a *Guide Dogs for the Blind* approved sighted guiding course with Open Country.
- Remember to introduce yourself to the person you are guiding, stand by their side and let them take your arm just above the elbow. Start walking and they will follow about half a step behind.
- Always check with the person you are guiding that they know where they are and that they are in a safe place before you leave them and tell them clearly when you go.

Do ✓

- ✓ Give instructions, warn of obstacles or hazards and describe surroundings, including changes in ground surface, but don't overload the person you are guiding with information!
- ✓ Warn of kerbs and steps as you approach them and say whether they go up or down
- ✓ Take extra care over stiles; always have a sighted person on either side – but only have one person giving instructions!
- ✓ Leave enough room around obstacles and watch for those at head height (e.g. branches) and ground level (e.g. tree roots)
- ✓ Walk slowly in a narrow space or busy area; straighten your guiding arm and move it to the middle of your back, the person you are guiding will step in behind you

Don't ✗

- ✗ Don't assume everyone who is visually impaired cannot see anything; ask them about their level of vision if you are unsure
- ✗ Don't push or pull the person you are guiding
- ✗ Don't worry about using everyday language such as see, watch etc. Just relax and speak as you normally would.
- ✗ Don't get distracted whilst you are guiding someone, it requires a lot of concentration
- ✗ Don't get too tired; have a break and swap with another volunteer or staff member if possible
- ✗ Don't let the person you are guiding pull on your arm or lean on you; if it is uncomfortable tell them
- ✗ Don't distract or feed a guide dog as this might put the owner in danger

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