



Tips for speaking about sight loss and guiding people

One in 12 people in London are at risk of losing their sight, and 200,000 people are blind or partially sighted. People living with sight loss are a vital part of our city, yet many feel isolated and excluded. You can help change that.



Vision Foundation
London's sight loss charity

Supporting people living with sight loss

There are simple things we can all do to make sure blind and partially sighted people feel welcome, supported and empowered. It starts with the way in which we speak about sight loss, and how we communicate with people and offer to help.

This factsheet gives tips and advice to help you feel more relaxed and confident when talking to or guiding someone with a visual impairment.



Language to use about sight loss

People have different views on how to talk about sight loss. Here's the language we use at the Vision Foundation.

Words to use:

- Blind or partially sighted person/people
- Someone with a visual impairment
- Someone with sight loss
- Visually impaired community
- Sight loss community

Words to avoid:

- The blind
 - You don't look blind
 - Suffering from blindness
 - Sight challenged
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Speaking to someone with sight loss

When talking to a blind or partially sighted person you might feel nervous about saying or doing the right thing, but there's no need to be. It can help to remember these tips.

- Blind and partially sighted people are just like everyone else, but they're living with sight loss. You don't need to speak differently to them or simplify things.
- Worrying too much about the language you use could stop you doing anything. So try your best, but don't be too precious or let the fear of getting things 'wrong' hold you back.
- Always ask the person directly what they need, rather than anyone who's with them.
- It's OK to use words like 'see' and 'watch'.
- In meetings or group situations, always say who you are and introduce the blind or partially sighted person to the others in the room so they know who's there. Offer to give them a quick guide of their surroundings.
- Always let a blind or partially sighted person know when you walk away from them. This will save them the embarrassment of talking to no one.

Guiding someone with sight loss

Blind or partially sighted people sometimes need help finding their way around. When you're guiding someone each person's needs will be different, but these general principles should help.

- Always ask the blind or partially sighted person how they would like to be guided.
 - Remember that even if someone uses a white cane or a guide dog to walk independently, they may still need help in unfamiliar surroundings.
 - Let them take your arm if they need to, but don't take theirs unless they've asked you to.
 - Tell them when you're approaching a step or a curb and say whether it goes up or down.
 - When going up or down steps, the blind or partially sighted person should be on the side with the handrail whenever possible.
 - Tell the person you're guiding whether doors open towards them or away from them. When going through a doorway, try to make sure they are on the hinge side and change sides if necessary.
 - If you're guiding someone into a seat, let them know whether it's in front of or behind them. Then put their hand on the back of the seat so they can orientate themselves and sit down.
 - Keep in mind that doors to rooms, cabinets or cars that are left partially open can be a hazard.
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About the Vision Foundation

The Vision Foundation transforms the lives of people facing or living with sight loss by funding projects that inform, empower and include.

Being blind or partially sighted shouldn't mean you're left out, isolated or held back. But too many people are. That's why we amplify the voices of blind and partially sighted people and inspire others to advocate and take action.

Our mission is to make London a shining example of a sight loss aware city.

Four ways you can make a difference...

Donate

Fundraise for us, make a donation or leave us a gift in your will to fund our life-changing work.

Shop

Visit your local Vision Foundation shop to donate and buy pre-loved clothes, books and toys.

Share

Do you have experience of living with sight loss? Share your story with us and together we'll change hearts, minds and lives.

Join

Become part of our expanding team of passionate volunteers and employees, working each day to make a difference.

Connect with us:

Call us: 020 7620 2066

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Website: www.visionfoundation.org.uk

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