



COMMUNICATING WITH ATTENDEES WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE LOW VISION

The following points of etiquette are helpful to keep in mind when interacting with a person who is blind or has low vision.

- Introduce yourself to people who are blind or have low vision using your name and/or position, especially if you are wearing a name badge containing this information.
- Speak directly to people who are blind or have low vision, not through a companion, guide, or other individual.
- Speak to people who are blind or have low vision using a natural conversational tone and speed.
- Address people who are totally blind or have extremely low vision by name when possible. This is especially important in crowded areas.
- Immediately greet people who are blind or have low vision when they enter a room or a service area. This allows you to let them know you are present and ready to assist. It also eliminates uncomfortable silences.
- Indicate the end of a conversation with a person who is totally blind or have extremely low vision to avoid the embarrassment of having them continue speaking when no one is actually there.
- Feel free to use words that refer to vision during the course of conversations with people who are blind or have low vision. Vision-oriented words such as look, see, and watching TV are a part of everyday verbal communication. The words blind and low vision are also acceptable in conversation.





- Be precise and thorough when you describe individuals, places, or things to people who are totally blind. Don't leave things out or change a description because you think it is unimportant or unpleasant. It is also important to refer to specific people or items by name or title instead of general terms like "you", or "they" or "this."
- Feel free to use visually descriptive language. Making reference to colors, patterns, designs, and shapes is perfectly acceptable.
- Speak about a person with a disability by first referring to the person and then to the disability. Refer to "people who are blind" rather than to "blind people."
- Offer to guide people who are blind or have low vision by asking if they would like assistance. Offer them your arm. It is not always necessary to provide guided assistance; in some instances it can be disorienting and disruptive. Respect the desires of the person you are with.
- Guide people who request assistance by allowing them to take your arm just above the elbow when your arm is bent. Walk ahead of the person you are guiding. Never grab a person who is blind or has low vision by the arm and push him/her forward.
- Guide dogs are working mobility tools. Do not pet them, feed them, or distract them while they are working.
- Do not leave a person who is blind or has low vision standing in "free space" when you serve as a guide. Always be sure that the person you guide has a firm grasp on your arm, or is leaning against a chair or a wall if you have to be separated momentarily.
- Be calm and clear about what to do if you see a person who is blind or has low vision about to encounter a dangerous situation. For example, if a person who is blind is about to bump into a stanchion in a hotel lobby, calmly and firmly call out, "Wait there for a moment; there is a pole in front of you."

(Adapted from information compiled by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission)