



Human Guide Technique

A human guide is a person who chooses to provide physical assistance to someone who is blind or visually impaired by guiding the person from one place to another.

1. Ask First

If you wish to offer your assistance, ask the person who is blind or visually impaired if the individual would like assistance. The individual who is blind or visually impaired will choose the mobility tools needed to travel which may include a long white cane, support cane, guide dog, human guide or a combination of these. Some individuals may choose not to use a mobility tool.

2. Establish Grip & Positioning

The guide may wish to ask which side the traveler prefers to be on. Verbally offer your arm to the individual who is blind or visually impaired while placing the back of your hand to the person's arm. The back of the hand is used so the individual who is blind or visually impaired can slide their hand up the guide's arm easily.

The individual who is blind or visually impaired will grasp the guide's arm just above the elbow. If a child or small adult requests guiding, the person may hold the guide's wrist. A tall person may place a hand on the guide's shoulder. Never grab the arm of the individual who is blind or visually impaired or try to direct by pushing or pulling.

After grip is established, the guide will be positioned one-half step ahead of the traveler.

3. Traveling

The guide should relax the guiding arm and walk at a normal pace. Adjust the walking pace according to the needs of the person being guided. Stay slightly ahead of the individual who is blind or visually impaired. The guide should pause before traveling on stairs or changing directions. The guide is responsible for the traveler's safety and should be aware of the additional

space both people are occupying. Never take the individual's long white cane from the person.

4. Narrow Passageways

When approaching a narrow passageway, move your guiding arm behind your back to signal to the blind traveler that you are approaching a narrow space. The traveler can then slide their hand down from the guide's elbow to the wrist and walk single file behind the guide. This technique can be used when approaching a door. In addition to bringing your arm behind your back, verbalize whether the approaching door opens in or out, and to the left or right.

5. Changing Directions

When needing to reverse directions or turn around, make the individual who is blind or visually impaired your pivot point and turn around the person. The individual who is blind or visually impaired will turn in place as you walk around the person, which maintains safety and keeps the person from walking into objects.

You can also choose to make an about-face turn. Verbally indicate to the person who is blind or visually impaired that you need to reverse direction. Stop walking and the individual who is blind or visually impaired will release their grip. Turn in place 180-degrees toward the individual as the person turns towards you. The guided person will re-establish a grip on your arm once the 180-degree turn is completed.

6. Stairs

When approaching ascending or descending stairs, pause at the edge of the first step. Verbalize that you have reached a stairway and indicate if the stairs are going up or down. Explain if a railing is available and switch sides with the individual who is blind or visually impaired to allow the person to hold the railing if desired. When the individual is ready, take the first step. The individual who is blind or visually impaired will follow one step behind you. Negotiate the stairs at an even pace, staying one step ahead of the person you are guiding. When you reach the landing, **pause** and allow the person you are guiding to reach the landing before continuing to walk.

This technique should also be used when stepping up or down curbs.

7. Communication

The guide may choose to verbalize upcoming changes in the environment including ramps, stairs, curbs or other changes in the surface.

8. Seating

To guide an individual who is blind or visually impaired to a seat or chair, place the hand of your guiding arm on the seat or back of the chair. The person who you are guiding will independently locate the seat by following your arm down to the chair. **Do not** grab the person's hand and place it on the seat or chair. You should also tell the person if the chair is on wheels or if it is a rocker or swivel chair.

9. Leaving

When you are ready to part ways with the individual you are guiding, inform the person and ask if the person would like to stand next to a wall or another stable object. It can become disorienting to the individual who is blind or visually impaired to be left alone in open space.

By following these few simple guidelines, you may safely and respectfully assist someone who is blind or visually impaired.