

Tips for Guiding a Customer who has Vision Loss

The following are instructions and tips on guiding a customer with vision loss. For more information about guiding someone with vision loss visit www.cnib.ca

- Ask first if your customer wishes to be guided.
- If the answer is “yes”, offer your arm. Ask which arm is better. Walk at a normal pace. The person will walk about a step behind. Announce handrails, doors (to the right/left, push/pull to open etc.) and describe the surrounding areas (such as what is in an aisle – shelves and sections).
- If you are guiding towards stairs:
 - Let the customer know if they have to walk up or down;
 - Approach the stairs head on, not at an angle and come to a full stop in front of the stairs;
 - Lead or guide your customer to the rail side to allow them to take hold of it;
 - Let them find the first step and then start to climb or descend the stairs;
 - Try to be one step ahead and announce the last step.
- If you are going through a narrow doorway, passage etc., the guide goes first, after explaining the circumstances and describing the area.
- Upon entering a room, offer to describe the dimensions and the location of people and furniture.
- If the person wishes to sit, offer to guide him/her and place his/her hand on the back of the chair.
- Keep the person informed when others approach or leave.
- If you must leave the individual alone, do not leave him or her standing in the middle of the room, with nothing to hold onto. If he/she is not seated, guide him/her to a door, wall, or piece of furniture to stand next to. This will help the person to stay spatially oriented.
- If your customer is accompanied by a guide dog, stand to the right of your customer, as the guide dog is usually at the owner’s left side. When guiding a customer with a dog, offer your left arm, but if the person you are guiding prefers to hold your right arm, that’s okay too.
- When the customer has a guide dog, offer to open the door first, before doing so. The customer may be using the door’s location as a reference point, or he/she may prefer to do it without assistance to protect the dog’s paws.

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