Human Guide Techniques.

To help you help others get around using Orientation & Mobility skills.
Losing your sight can be disorienting. Find your way around again – in your neighborhood and in the world.

There are easy-to-learn ways to give meaningful assistance to someone who is visually impaired – basic techniques are described and pictured. With these skills, the two of you – guide and traveler - work as a team, communicating as you go. All travelers are not the same, but following these techniques can help you become an effective human guide while still maintaining respect for the traveler’s independence.

**Human Guide Techniques: Leading the Way Together**

1. **Making Contact**
   - When approaching a person, the guide introduces herself and asks whether the traveler would like some help.
   - The guide should not grab or pull at the traveler.
   - The guide makes contact by placing the back of her hand against the back of the traveler’s hand or arm.

2. **Grasp**
   - When help is requested, the traveler should grasp the guide’s arm just above the elbow with his fingers on the inside of the guide’s arm (near the waist) and his thumb on the outside of the arm.
   - This grasp results in the traveler’s hand forming a “c,” as if holding a bottle of water.
   - The traveler’s elbow of the aforementioned hand will be at a 90 degree angle to feel the guide’s movements.

3. **Support Grasp**
   - For added balance, rather than holding the guide’s arm above the elbow, the traveler may prefer to link his arm with the guide’s arm. Remember to walk at the pace of the traveler and not your own.
4. Modified or Child Grasp

- If the regular grasp is not comfortable due to height differences between the traveler and the guide, a modified or child grasp can be used.
- The traveler can grasp the guide by the wrist, or can hold onto a shoulder for a traveler that is taller than the guide.
- The guide should use a slower pace than with the regular grasp.

5. Stance

- The guide should hold her arm relaxed and steady at her side.
- The traveler should be next to the guide as he walks and stays a half step behind.
- The guide should provide information about the ground so the traveler does not trip over uneven terrains.

6. Narrow-Area Stance (doorway or crowded area)

- The guide moves her forearm and hand to rest against her waist at a 90 degree angle, with her palm facing outward.
- The traveler slides his hand to the guide’s wrist and stands directly behind the guide at arm’s length. They both walk slowly through the narrow area and then return to their original stance.

7. Doors

- The guide opens the door and tells the traveler which way the door opens (in or out, left or right).
- The traveler holds the door with his free hand as the team walks through the door.
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8. Chair seating

- The guide should approach a chair from the front or the side.
- The guide should state the type of chair - arms/no arms, stationery/with wheels.
- The guide should give reference points - table placement, if one is present, other landmarks as applicable.
- The guide places her guiding hand on the back of the chair, the traveler follows the guide's arm to the top of the chair and sits down.

9. Stairs

- The guide tells the traveler when approaching stairs, and whether the stairs go up or down.
- The traveler places his free hand on the handrail.
- The guide walks one step ahead of the traveler and alerts the traveler when approaching the top or bottom step.

Learn to navigate your world.... or just your kitchen.

Braille Institute provides free Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training to help those who are blind or visually impaired learn how to safely navigate their environment and travel safely. Our O&M Specialists will work one-on-one to help individuals achieve their goals and overcome challenges.

Discover techniques that will help you:

- Walk and communicate with a human guide, white cane, guide dog and more.
- Approach and pass through doors and narrow spaces.
- Take a seat on a chair.
- Traverse up and down stairs.

Need More Information?

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