

Tips for Working with People with Visual Impairments

- 1. Speak naturally when you talk. Do not raise your voice or shout so the blind person will understand you better.** Don't be afraid to use words that refer to seeing. However, the words "here" and "there" are too general for descriptive use. Be specific, and label objects that give direction and location.
- 2. Gestures are not always enough.** In a group setting, call the child by name when you want a response from them.
- 3. Use sound to help the child.** Your voice leads and directs a visually impaired child within the environment. Get the child's attention before giving instruction. A moving speaker confuses a child. Describe with clear directions and in a normal speaking voice where you are and how the child can reach you.
- 4. Help make the sound environment meaningful for the visually impaired child.** Eliminate confusing or conflicting sounds. The sorting of sounds is a difficult task which takes time, experience and explanation to develop.
- 5. Explain what is happening around the child.** Show where sounds and smells are coming from. As the child explores, describe everything clearly.
- 6. Orient the child to the space and equipment in it.** Let the child know if the space has been changed around. Allow the child to touch objects in his/her surroundings. Independent mobility is important and sometimes difficult for visually impaired children.
- 7. Avoid overprotection.** Remember that all children get bumps and scrapes occasionally. Safety is important, but overprotection can be just as detrimental to a child as under protection.
- 8. Encourage independence.** Let the children do as much as possible for themselves.
- 9. Build the child's self-confidence by letting them try.** Take the child through an activity or game a couple of times before requiring independent movement. For a sighted child, motor imitation is a visual skill, whereas a visually impaired child needs to experience the activity physically.
- 10. Consider the available light source.** Light can be distracting for some partially sighted children, while for others, indirect lighting may be inadequate.
- 11. Encourage children to use what functional vision they have.**
- 12. Teach the child through the remaining senses.** A visually impaired child cannot learn by observing and imitating the action of others. You may need to physically put the child through an action or allow the child to experience the actions you are performing.

13. **State your name when approaching a visually impaired child.** Voices are not always easy to identify, particularly in crowds or stress situations. Also, introduce others in the room, especially if they are newcomers or people who are not usually present.
14. **Relay accurate information to the visually impaired child in order to maintain a sense of trust.**
15. **Address the student directly, not through a companion or guide.**
16. **If you are talking to a blind student and you must leave, tell him or her that you are leaving.**
17. **Doors should be completely open or shut.** A half-open door is a hazard to a person with a visual impairment.
18. **Do not be a servant.** Do things together.
19. **Ropes taped to the floor help visually impaired students to identify activity boundaries.**
20. **Do not think of them as blind children.** They are children who happen to be blind.

Credit: **Games for People with Sensory Impairments:
Strategies for Including Individuals of All Ages**
by Lauren J. Lieberman and Jim F. Cowert
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