



Guide Dogs for the Blind

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Guide Dog and Blindness Etiquette When You Meet a Person Who is Blind

Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) is dedicated to creating greater inclusion by providing education about blindness etiquette. Here are some pointers to help ensure everyone has a positive experience.

- Treat a person who is blind the same as you would anyone else. People who are blind do the same things as you, but may use different techniques.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice and talk directly to the person, not to their guide dog or companion.
- Be mindful when asking about causes of blindness. This is highly personal information.
- Do not pull, steer, or grab a person.
- It is ok to use common, everyday words and phrases like “look,” “see,” or “watching TV.”
- If someone looks as though they may need assistance, ask. If a person is about to encounter a dangerous situation, voice your concerns in a calm and clear manner.
- Provide specific directions, such as “ten feet to the right,” or “left at the next corner,” instead of vague descriptions like “over there.”
- Offer your elbow or arm for someone to hold as a way to guide a person through an environment that could be confusing or dangerous. It is ok if you’re inexperienced as a human guide— you can always ask for tips on how to improve.
- Be considerate. If you notice something amiss with a person’s clothing, accessories, or body, mention it tactfully and/or privately.
- In a restaurant, offer to read the menu and receipt aloud, and be sure to describe the items and location of what is on the table. Never assume someone would not want to order their own meal. When the food arrives, ask if the person would like to know where things are on the plate, and give specific descriptions, such as: “The rice is at the top of the plate.”