

Assisting children who are visually impaired

Meeting and greeting

Say "Hello" and who you are, before asking if the child would like help. Just talk normally.



Guiding

Walk half a step ahead of the child with visual impairment that you are guiding. If they are tall enough, let the child hold onto your elbow with their hand. If they are not, let a small child hold your wrist, or even a finger.

If you are friends, or the child's parents, then you can hold his hand.



Steps and stairs

Say whether you are going up or down and get the child to follow your arm to find the handrail. Walk one step ahead and set off once the child is ready. Don't rush – stairs can be frightening, especially coming down. Take a slightly longer step at the top, to allow enough room for the child to step up and away from the edge. Remember to take extra care when going down stairs as children have shorter legs.



Doorways

Say if the door is a "push" or "pull" door. Place the child on the hinge side and open the door with your guiding hand. You may need to swap sides for this. The child should take the handle from you by following down your arm with her free hand. She can then close the door behind you both. For a small child, you will need to open and close the door for them.

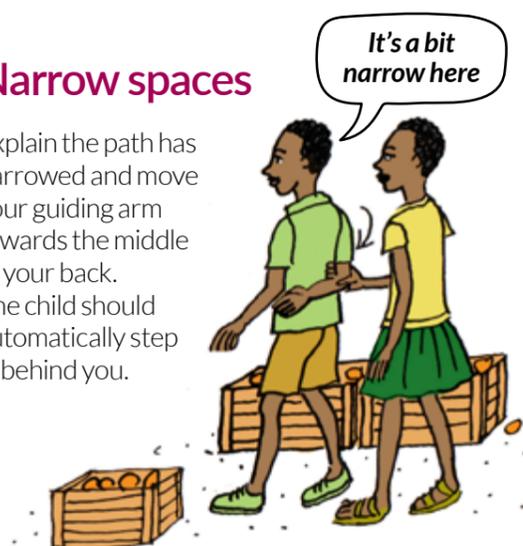
Seating

Guide the child to the seat and say what it is – e.g. a chair, sofa or stool. Place your hand on the back of the seat to show the height and ask him to follow your arm down to find the seat, before sitting down.



Narrow spaces

Explain the path has narrowed and move your guiding arm towards the middle of your back. The child should automatically step in behind you.



Roads and kerbs

A kerb is the step off or onto a pavement and marks the edge of the road. Stop at the kerb and check for traffic. If it's safe, say "kerb down", and cross the road using the shortest route. Say "kerb up" as you reach the other side. If there is not a kerb, stop at the side of the road and say to the child "We are waiting to cross the road". Wait until it is safe to cross, and then say to the child, "It's safe now. Let's cross the road".

When walking by the side of a road, keep the child on the side furthest from the road, traffic or other people rushing by.



Travelling by car

Guide the child to the car. Tell the child if she is getting into the front or the back of the car and use your guiding arm to indicate where the handle is. Remember children are usually safer when riding in the back. Allow the child to open the door and make sure the door is fully open. Then ask the child to put her hand on the top of the doorframe and keep it there, as she backs onto her seat – bottom first. At the end of the journey, get out first and help the child out.

Remember!



Incorrect position

"Don't push me"



Correct position

"Walk with me"