

Assisting children who are visually impaired

Meeting and greeting

Talking normally, introduce yourself before asking the child whether they'd like help.



Guiding

Walk half a step ahead. Let the child hold onto your elbow if they're tall enough; smaller children may hold your wrist, even a finger. Only parents or friends may hold the child's hand.



Steps and stairs

Say whether you're going up or down, then encourage the child to find the handrail by following your arm. When the child is ready, set off one step ahead. Don't rush – stairs can be frightening, especially coming down. Take a slightly longer step at the top, allowing enough room for the child to step up and away from the edge.



Doorways

Say if the door is a "push" or "pull". Placing the child on the hinge side, open the door with your guiding hand. You may need to swap sides for this. The child should take the handle from you by using their free hand to follow your arm, then they can close the door behind you both. With smaller children, you will need to both open and close the door.



Seating

Guide the child to the seat, describing it as you approach (eg chair, sofa, stool). Place your hand on the back of the seat to indicate its height and ask the child to follow your arm before sitting down.



Narrow spaces

Explain that the path has narrowed, then 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. Stop at the kerb and check for traffic. If it's safe, say "kerb down", cross using the shortest route, then say "kerb up" as you reach the other side. If there is no kerb, stop at the roadside and say, "We are waiting to cross." Wait until it is safe, then say "It's safe now. Let's cross." When walking by a roadside, keep the child on the side furthest from the road.



Travelling by car

Tell the child if they are getting into the front or back (remember, back seats are safer), then use your guiding arm to indicate where the door handle is. Allow the child to open the door fully, then guide their hand to the top of the door frame and keep it there as the child backs onto the seat – bottom first. At the end of the journey, get out first before assisting the child.



Remember!



Incorrect position

"Don't push me"



Correct position

"Walk with me"