

Orientation and Mobility: Basic Guide Techniques

After asking the person who is blind if he needs assistance, give a verbal ("Take my arm") and physical indication (touch the back of your hand to the back of the traveler's hand or forearm.)

Basic Guide

1. The traveler will grip the guide's arm just above the elbow with the fingers toward the inside and the thumb toward the outside (as if holding a soda can.)
2. The traveler's arm will be close to his body with his elbow bent to a 90 degree angle (forearm is parallel to the floor.)
3. The traveler's shoulder will be directly behind the guide's shoulder, making the pair one and one-half people wide.
4. The guide should relax her arm and walk at a typical pace.



A preschool child may grip an adult's wrist or first two fingers, whereas a tall blind person may need to grip a short guide's arm just under the armpit or on top of the shoulder.

Narrow Passageway

1. The guide moves her arm to the small of her back.
2. The traveler slides his hand to the guide's wrist while extending his arm and moving directly behind the guide. The pair now occupy "single file" space.
3. The guide slows her pace to pass through the narrow area.
4. When the narrow space is cleared, the guide returns her arm to her side and the traveler resumes the basic grip.



Upper Protection

1. The traveler will rotate his shoulder so his entire arm is parallel to the floor. (Extend your arm forward using your shoulder as a pivot.)
2. The arm is bent at the elbow to make an inside angle of approximately 120 degrees.
3. The fingertips should be in front of the opposite shoulder, palm facing outward.
4. A modification to protect the head and face: Raise the hand approximately one foot for protection from an obstacle such as an overhanging tree limb or open door.



Lower Protection

1. The traveler extends her arm diagonally in front of her, palm facing in.
2. The hand is centered at midline at approximately 12 inches away.

This technique is useful in classrooms for locating tables, chairs, and desks. A folding cane, notebook, or rolled up magazine is useful as an extender for a person who is tall.



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Turning Around

1. Either the guide or traveler may indicate the need to turn around. ("I forgot my keys!")
2. The pair each turn toward each other, completing a 180 turn.
3. The guide initiates contact with the new travel arm and steps forward into the correct place for basic guide.

The traveler may either drop his grip hand during the turn or maintain contact with the guide.

Changing Sides

1. The guide indicates that the student needs to change sides of her body.
2. The traveler grips the guides arm with his free hand just above the initial grip hand; he then releases this hand.
3. With his now-free hand, the traveler moves across the guide's back to the opposite side and grasps the guide's arm.
4. The traveler then resumes the basic guide technique with the correct hand.

Doorways

1. The guide should position the student on the side of the door's hinges.
2. The guide moves to narrow passageway and indicates if the door is away/toward or push/pull.
3. The guide opens the door and walks through.
4. The traveler uses upper protection to make contact with the door, clears the doorway, and closes the door if necessary.
5. The guide resumes basic guide technique.

The guide does NOT hold the door open for the traveler. It is awkward and may misalign the traveler for walking through the door.

Stairs, Steps, and Curbs

1. The guide approaches the stairs perpendicularly and pauses to indicate a change in elevation.
2. The traveler may locate the edge of the step with his foot.
3. The guide begins going up or down the stairs, remaining 1 step in front of the traveler.
4. The guide pauses at the top or bottom of the stairs indicating the last step and allows the traveler to complete his last step before continuing.

Either the guide or traveler may use the handrail.

THE WHITE CANE



The use of the long white cane assists the person who is blind in three ways:

- ◆ It **identifies** the person as legally blind
- ◆ It **protects** the person who uses it correctly from colliding with obstacles below the waist.
- ◆ It **provides information** regarding obstacles, floor and ground coverings and level changes.

7 Components of the **Basic Touch Technique**

(NOTE: Leaving the cane tip on the ground is called constant contact and is composed of 1-5.)

1. **GRIP:** The cane grip rests in the user's palm with the back of the hand facing laterally (right for a right-handed user, left for a left-handed user). The index finger is extended downward along the flat side of the grip. The thumb is positioned over and around the grip with the remaining fingers flexed around the bottom of the grip so that the crook (if any) is in an inferior position. The thumb and index finger always remain up, forming a "V" on the top of the cane.
2. **MIDLINE:** The wrist should be centered at the mid-line of the body.
3. **EXENSION:** The arm is fully extended in order to provide the maximum reaction time.
4. **WRIST ACTION:** The wrist repeats a pattern of flexion, extension, hyperextension, with the index finger and thumb pointing alternately left and right as the cane tip touches the surface ahead.
5. **RHYTHM:** (In step) The cane user is in step with the cane when walking such that the right foot is forward and the cane tip is touching on the left, and the left foot is forward when the cane tip is touching on the right.
6. **ARC WIDTH:** The width of the arc covered by the cane should be equal to the width of the person's shoulders, plus approximately one inch on either side.
7. ****ARC HEIGHT:** The cane tip is one half inch above the ground at the apex of the arc.
Note: Variations of this technique may be necessary to accommodate the individual's abilities and/or preferences. There are many additional aspects of travel and orientation through the use of the long white cane. ALL instruction in the use of the cane must be provided by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS).

****Many students prefer to keep the tip in constant contact with the ground.**

Quick Guide

DO:

- *ask a person who is blind if he needs assistance and offer your arm using correct basic guide technique.
- *anchor a person who is blind to a wall, table, chair, or other fixture if you must leave him.
- *speak to a person who is blind when passing him in the hall. ("Good morning" or "hello" is sufficient!)
- *keep doors **fully** opened or **fully** closed.
- *tell a person who is blind when you rearrange or add new furniture.
- *encourage safe travel (and safe hands.) Tell your student if he is misusing his cane!
- *pause and/or verbally indicate when you are at steps or drop-offs
- *encourage independence.
- *ask your vision teachers and O&M specialists any questions you may have, at any time.

DON'T:

- *assume a person who is blind needs help simply because he cannot see.
- *grab or push a person who is blind by the arm or shoulders to guide him.
- *leave him alone in the middle of nowhere while using basic guide.
- *pretend you are not there.
- *play with or hide a white cane.
- *leave classroom (or any!) doors halfway open.
- *do things for him that he can do independently.
- *worry! You're going to do a great job!! 😊