

Good communication when speaking to a person with vision impairment

IMPORTANT: Remember to **treat all people with a disability as a person first** and then consider their impairment!

- Let the person who is vision impaired know that you have entered the room or joined the group, and if appropriate, who else is there.
- Identify yourself. Do not play guessing games such as “do you know who I am?”
- Always make it clear to whom you are talking, by using the person’s name wherever possible.
- Always address the person with vision impairment directly and **never** through a third person.
- Never assume that a person with vision impairment will need or want your help as many people are quite capable and independent. A good way of finding out is to ask “Do you need help?” If they do need help, find out exactly how they want to be helped by asking, “How may I help you?”
- Let the person who is vision impaired know when you are leaving the room or gathering so that he or she does not end up talking to you once you have left.
- It is not necessary to raise your voice or slow your speech simply because someone has vision impairment. Speak as you would normally.
- Feel comfortable in using the language that you usually would, including words such as “look” and “see”.
- Be cautious in the use of sarcastic humour and when making inappropriate gestures. You never know from the start whether a person with vision impairment has enough functional vision to see your body language and facial expressions, or not. Non-verbal gestures that would usually help to indicate that you mean the opposite of what you say, might not be appropriate.

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