

Social Etiquette Suggestions

For interactions with Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired

How does a person respectfully treat people who are blind? The following guidelines will assist you in remembering to emphasize "people" first, before the disability, to avoid negative connotations or patronizing language and tips on interacting with people who are blind.

Use the following people first phrases when writing or speaking:

- "People with disabilities," instead of "the disabled" or "handicapped."
- "People who are blind," instead of "blind people."
- "Has (specify the disability)," instead of "afflicted with."
- "Born with (specify the disability)," instead of "has a birth defect."
- "Uses a wheelchair," instead of "confined to a wheelchair."
- "People who are deaf," instead of "deaf and dumb," "deaf-mute," or "hearing impaired people."
- "Products created by people who are blind," instead of "blind-made products."

Keep the following in mind when interacting with Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

- Provide a brief description when you introduce the student to other people.
- Always introduce yourself by stating your name when you meet and/or greet the student (Not everyone recognizes voices or remembers them.)
- When the student is with you, and you greet someone in passing, be sure to greet anyone you meet by name so the student knows who it is.
- Don't be afraid to use words that refer to seeing like, "Do you see?" and "Look at that!" as they are common expressions that everyone uses. People with visual impairments are not offended by these words and understand that these words are part of normal conversations.
- Be specific and label objects that give direction and location (not "here" and "there").
- Don't shout. Visually impaired or blind does not mean the student is hearing impaired.
- Don't leave a person who is blind talking to themselves. Let them know when you are leaving.
- Don't use hand signals. People with severe visual impairments can't see waving or pointing hands.
- Speak directly to a person who is blind. Don't speak to a family member or friend and ignore the person who is blind. Remember they can speak for themselves.
- Don't push, pull or grab a person who is blind. This can cause accidents and can be embarrassing.
- Offer your arm for assistance when walking rather than taking their arm.

