

## Human Guide Technique

1. Greet the individual by name, tell the person your name, and where you will be going.
2. Touch the back of the person's hand with yours and ask him to hold onto your arm.
3. Encourage the person to grasp your arm:
  - a. just above your elbow
  - b. with fingers on the inside of your arm and thumb on the outside of your arm (The grip looks like they could be holding onto a cup).
  - c. and the grasping arm comfortably bent at the elbow at a 90 degree angle.



4. Hold your guiding arm relaxed and directly by your side (body). Your elbow can be bent, or not, depending upon your preference and the needs of the person you are guiding.

5. The person being guided should be to the side of, and about one half-step, behind the guide.



## Human Guide (continued)

### Seating at a Table

1. Guide the individual to the table and chair so that her body is at a slight angle facing the chair either to the left or right of the chair. Approach in this "kiddy corner" manner so when the individual pulls out the chair, she won't bump herself.
2. Assist the person to find the back of the chair, and tell the individual what is being touched.
3. Assist the individual to find the table top, and again, tell the individual what is being touched.
4. The individual can then pull out the chair, if able, and inspect the seat with her hand to avoid sitting on anything that could have been left on the chair.



### Seating at a Chair

1. Guide the individual to the chair so that she is facing the front of the chair.
2. Depending upon the individual's height, assist her to find either the back or the seat of the chair.
3. The individual should then clear off the seat, grasp the arms of the chair if available, turn around and sit.

## Human Guide (continued)

### Switching Sides

While guiding someone, you may find the need to switch sides, that is, have the individual hold onto your left arm instead of your right or vice versa. Switching sides may be needed at stair cases so that the individual can hold onto the available handrail, or when walking through doorways. The easiest way to switch sides is simply for the guide to turn and face the front of the individual and contact the individual's other hand or arm so that he can grasp the guide:

1. Tell the individual that you are going to switch sides and why switching sides is needed.
2. While keeping in physical contact, turn in front of the individual so that you are facing him.
3. Reach out and contact the individual's other hand or arm so that the individual can grasp you.
4. Assist if needed to release the original grasp and establish a new one with the other hand.
5. Remember to always remain in contact with the individual as you are switching sides so the individual does not stand alone in free space.



6. Resume your sighted guide position and continue on!



## Human Guide (continued)

### Narrow Passageway

A way to guide a person through a narrow or congested area is to have the person follow you without losing contact with you.



1. Tell the person that you need to go through the doorway, aisle, etc. and must walk single file.
2. Move your guiding arm behind you and toward the middle of your back.
3. Step directly in front of the person you are guiding.
4. Ask the person to walk behind you and follow you through the area.
5. Once you are through the narrow area, resume the normal sighted guide position.

## Human Guide (continued)

### Doorways

When approaching a door, slow down your pace and check out a couple of key pieces of information: on which side is the door hinged and which way does the door open—toward or away from you? Once you have gathered this information, you can open and walk through the doorway in the following manner:



1. Tell the person you are guiding that you are approaching a closed door.
2. Explain which side the door is hinged on and which way it opens ("toward you" or "away from you").
3. Switch sides if needed so that the person is on the same side as the door hinges.
4. Move your guiding arm behind you as you would when using the narrow passageway technique and step in front of the person you are guiding.
5. Open the door and ask the person to use his free hand to hold the door as you both walk through it.
6. Once both are through the door, resume the normal sighted guide position.

## Human Guide (continued)

### Entering a Car

1. Guide the person to the car so that the person is next to and a step behind the car door.
2. Assist the person to locate the door handle with one hand and the roof with the other.
3. The person can then open the door (or you can help), step toward the car and sit inside. It is important for the person to know where the roof is to avoid head bumps when getting into the vehicle. Always be sure to also protect the person so this does not happen.

### Entering a Van

1. Guide the person to the van. Depending upon the type of van, it may be easier for you to open the door. Also, depending upon the distance from the pavement to the first step, it may be a good idea to have a portable van step to place on the ground. A sturdy van step that has a wide base for stepping on and a high handrail attached is most useful.



2. Assist the person to locate the handrail, if available, for support. Offer a "step up" or "step down" verbal cue as the person steps up and into or out of the van.



3. Again, depending upon the type and size of the van, it may be helpful to have someone else inside the van to guide or verbally direct the person safely to a seat. If you are alone, you can also verbally guide the person into a seat.



## Human Guide (continued)

### Exiting a Car or Van

1. Open the door to the car or van.
2. Assist the individual to locate the step out of the car or van.
3. Provide physical assistance as needed to help the individual safely step to the ground. Offer support by contacting the individual's hand with yours.
4. Let the individual hold onto you for support if needed.



Depending upon the type and size of the van and the distance from the van step to the ground, it may be helpful to have a portable van step.



Example of portable step  
from [www.blickmanstore.com](http://www.blickmanstore.com)

## Human Guide (continued)

Modifications for all of the above techniques may be necessary for some individuals. Please consult a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) for evaluation and training.

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### **See also MCB/DDS Partnership handouts:**

- Human Guide Considerations
- Canes
- Trailing
- Voice Guide

**For additional resources and on line links, please visit:**  
[focusonvisionandvisionloss.org](http://focusonvisionandvisionloss.org)