

Trailing, Landmarks, Squaring Off, Protective Techniques and Voice Guide

Trailing provides an individual a way to walk independently by following a wall or handrail. Prior to encouraging anyone to trail, please first preview the route to be sure that it is obstacle free and that the trailing surface is comfortable and safe.

1. Greet the individual by name, tell the person your name and the destination. Use Human Guide or Voice Guide the individual to the start of the trailing route.

2. Encourage the individual to reach out to locate the trailing surface.

3. When trailing along a handrail the individual should lightly grip the rail by wrapping fingers around it.

4. When trailing along a wall, the individual may hold hands and arms in one of three positions depending upon his preference and ability:



- Side of Hand: With the pinky finger side of the hand against the wall and all fingers bent in toward the palm to protect fingers.
- Back of Hand: With the back of the hand against the wall, fingers bent in toward the palm to protect fingers.
- Palm of Hand: With palm open and against the wall. Please remember that the palm is the most sensitive part of the hand and that when trailing in this position, fingers cannot be easily protected.



Trailing along a railing.

Trailing, Landmarks, Squaring Off and Protective Technique, Voice Guide (continued)

Trailing (continued)

5. Encourage the individual to hold the trailing arm out at waist level and extended as forward as possible along the trailing surface to provide forward protection.

6. Encourage the individual to walk facing forward so that the body is parallel to the trailing surface.

7. Encourage the individual to stand or walk as upright as possible for safety when trailing. See the **Protective Techniques** section below.



Landmarks can be used to indicate to the individual where to change direction, make a turn along a specific route or to help maintain orientation.

Tactile landmarks can be fixed objects already located in the environment or those strategically placed along routes where needed. Landmarks are aspects of the environment that are always present. Some examples are doors, windows, fire hydrants, and vending machines.

Sounds and smells can also be used as landmarks although they may not be as reliable. Some examples are the sound of running water, radio, wind chimes, and the hum of a soda machine. Smells from the kitchen can help someone to realize where they are.

Trailing, Landmarks, Squaring Off and Protective Technique, Voice Guide (continued)

Squaring Off is a technique that can be used in conjunction with trailing to help a person maintain a straight line of travel when turning or when crossing a hallway.

1. The individual places his back against the wall that he was trailing.
2. To maintain safety while crossing free space, encourage the individual to extend hands and arms out in front when crossing the space to protect the head and torso when walking. See **Protective Techniques**.



Protective Techniques should be used when walking through open space or areas with head and/or waist level hazards. Individuals should be monitored for safety at all times when crossing open space. The techniques are listed below in order of most to least protection when used correctly.



Upper Protective Technique

One hand and arm diagonally in front of the head and neck area, with palm facing out, away from the body.

Lower Protective Technique

One hand and arm diagonally in front of the waist and lower, with palm facing in, toward the body.

Most protection is offered when Upper and Lower Protective Techniques are used at the same time.

Trailing, Landmarks, Squaring Off and Protective Technique, Voice Guide (continued)

Variations of Protective Techniques

1. Both Hands Together
With both hands and arms
Outstretched and hands
clasped together.



2. Both Hands Extended
With both hands and arms
outstretched, palms facing
out, fingers extended at
head/neck level.



3. Object in Hands
Holding onto an object for
protection so that arms stay in
front of the body.



4. Hat with Long Brim
Wearing a hat with a long brim such as a baseball cap or visor, offers
some forward protection if safe use of hands and arms is limited. The
brim may contact the wall before the person, offering limited
protection.

Trailing, Landmarks, Squaring Off and Protective Technique, Voice Guide (continued)

Voice Guide can be safely used in areas where there is level flooring and few obstacles. An individual can follow a voice guide to travel to a destination without physical assistance such as sighted guide.

1. Greet the individual by name, tell him your name and the destination.
2. Encourage the person to use protective techniques when walking through open space.

3. Walk facing the individual, intermittently turning forward as you move to ensure that you do not bump yourself or fall. Talk to the individual as he walks toward you, as he will be following your voice as a guide.



4. Maintain the individual's safety at all times by making sure that bumping into objects or furniture does not occur when walking.

5. Describe to the individual what is to the left and right while walking. Identify any landmarks along the way, as well as any upcoming environmental changes. Explain any sounds and smells along the route.



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See also MCB/DDS Partnership handouts:

- Human Guide
- Sensitivity to Vision Loss: How to Best Assist

For additional resources, please visit: focusonvisionandvisionloss.org