

How do I Orient the Student Who is Visually Impaired?

To be independent, the student must be properly oriented to the environment.

☆ Be Specific.

Use concise language when describing locations in the gym. For example, "run to the north wall" is more clear than "run to the far wall". Landmarks within the gymnasium could also be used, for example, "run to the climber wall" or "run to the stage wall".

☆ Start with a guided tour.

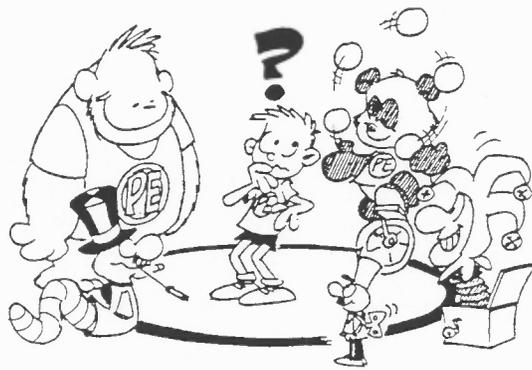
The importance of a proper orientation cannot be stressed enough. Guide the student around the room or gym and indicate the location of major fixtures. Teach the student that objects are usually at certain levels in the gymnasium. For example, balls are at a low level on the floor, a crash mat is at shin height, the box horse is at waist height or higher, the benches are at knee height, etc. This will assist the student who is partially sighted to find apparatus by knowing at which level to scan for the objects.

Ensure that the student becomes familiar with the location of the bleachers, equipment room, locker room doors, etc. and potential hazards such as stairs, protruding fountains, mat hooks etc.

Give the student the chance to "feel" the environment and memorize the location of important landmarks. Often the teacher can become a "landmark" by always speaking from one particular point in the gym, or by wearing a brightly-coloured pinny or t-shirt if the student is partially sighted. Once oriented, have the student take a sighted peer or teacher on a tour of the area to solidify the location of the landmarks. Be sure to ask the student to identify problem areas that you may not be aware of (such as echoes in the gym, glare from windows). An orientation to outside fields and play areas should also occur.



My hearing is okay, I just don't see very well.



I'd like to know who's in the room. Please identify yourself and introduce me to the others who are present.



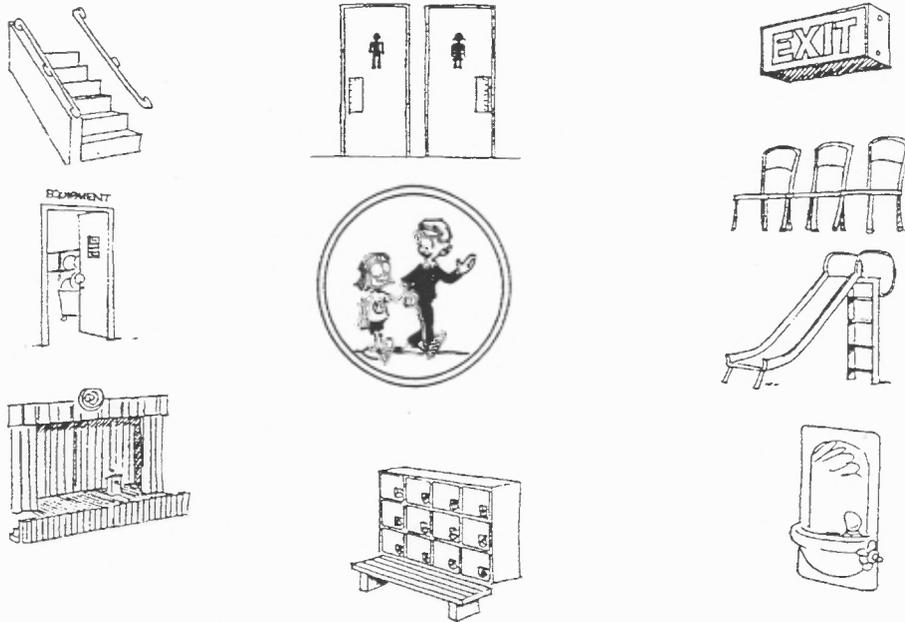
Please tell me when you are leaving - anyone would feel silly talking to thin air.

☆ **Reorientation.**

Fellow students, as well as the teacher should be aware that the student will need to become reoriented to the environment after each activity and will require time to do this. A classmate could assist with this process. This is especially important for areas that are not commonly used such as emergency exits.

Never leave a student who is partially sighted or totally blind alone in the gym or outside activity area with no means of orientation. The student should be able to touch a wall or other familiar landmark. The student can become easily disoriented if left stranded in the middle of the room or playing field.

Assign the student a locker at the end of the row for easy identification and access. A lock and key may be preferable to a combination lock. Be sure to ask the student however. Although the key lock may be easier to open, it sets the student apart from the other students.



Ensure that you clearly indicate the location of the important areas.

Here are a few general pointers to help you and your students feel more at ease with students who are visually impaired. Remember, the words "look" and "see" are a part of everybody's vocabulary. Don't exclude these words from the conversation (see Appendix F: Recognizing, Understanding, and Assisting Persons Who are Visually Impaired).

What should I do when I meet a blind person?

When approaching a person who is blind,



don't grab an arm unexpectedly.

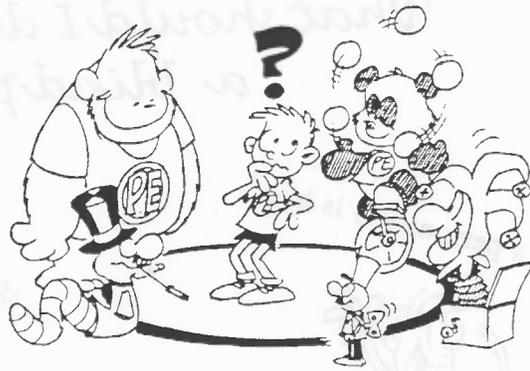
Beware of double doors which have a centre divider.



Whistling to a dog guide is one of the big taboos.



Dog guides are often used by individuals who are totally blind. My hearing is okay, I just don't see very well.



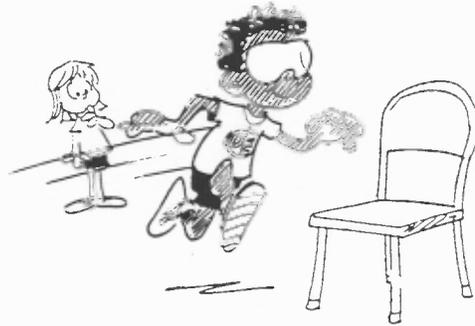
I'd like to know who's in the room. Please identify yourself and introduce me to the others who are present.



Warn me if an accident is about to happen. Don't watch it happen.



Please tell me when you are leaving - anyone would feel silly talking to thin air.



Warn me if an accident is about to happen. Don't watch it happen.



Encourage me to touch lockers, wall hooks, etc. to memorize their location.



Classmates can assist in orientating me to each new activity set-up.