# MOBILITY & ORIENTATION

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The mission of the Foundation is to fund the research which will lead to the causes, treatments, preventive methods and cures for retinitis pigmentosa, macular degeneration, Usher syndrome, Stargardt disease and the entire spectrum of retinal degenerative diseases.

This booklet includes information on Orientation and Mobility, cane travel, Dog Guide Schools, driving alternatives, night vision aids, tips for travelers and sighted guide techniques.

The Mobility Guide was designed as an aid for you, your family and your friends to help as you meet new challenges and gain more independence. The Foundation hopes you will find this Mobility Guide useful and informative.

Thank you for your interest in the Foundation. We hope this packet of information is helpful to you.

Please note:

Any products and/or services listed in this guide are presented as a source of information and should not be misinterpreted as a recommendation of the Foundation. The Foundation has not tested or evaluated the goods/products reported upon to determine their safety or effectiveness.
The White Cane

People who are blind have used a cane as a tool for travel for centuries. In 1921, the white cane became the symbol of blindness when an English photographer who had lost his sight decided to use a white cane to let people in his community know he was blind. In 1930, a Lions Club member watched as a man who was blind attempted to cross the street with a black cane that was barely visible to motorists against the dark pavement. The Lions decided to paint the cane white to make it more visible. Thus, the Lions Club International is attributed with introducing the white cane in North America. In 1931, the Lions Club International adopted the promotion of white canes for people who are blind as a national program.

The white cane, as we know it today, is the symbol of blindness, courage and independent spirit. There are three types of white canes, depending on a person’s visual impairment, age, height and specific needs.

**Identification Canes**

- lightweight, can collapse to fit in a pocket or briefcase
- used by the person to indicate to others that they are blind or visually impaired
- can be used to assist with depth perception on stairs or curbs

**White Support Cane**

- collapsible, or rigid
- designed to support a person’s weight and to help him or her walk

**Long Cane**

- used as a bumper and a probe
- used mainly for independent travel in the home or unfamiliar places
- requires specialized training from an Orientation and Mobility instructor

The most commonly used are rigid long canes, folding or collapsible canes and orthopaedic support canes used in conjunction with travel canes. They are used primarily to help navigate the area ahead of the user. Using the cane, a person who is blind or visually impaired can check for objects in the path of travel, changes in the surface underfoot and the nature of the surface ahead. The secondary function of the cane is for identification.
Dog Guide Schools believe that exceptional breeding and expert training of their dogs is essential to the welfare of the visually impaired individual. Although most dog guide schools offer the service animal and training at no cost, each school has its own individual policy regarding requirements, training and cost.

**Eye Dog Foundation**
Administration Office:
211 South Montclair St., Suite A
Bakersfield, CA 93309-3165
800-393-3641
661-831-1333
Email: eyedog@arrival.net

Training Center:
8252 South 15th Avenue
Phoenix, AZ  85041-7806
602-276-0051
www.eyedogfoundation.org
Email: eyedogaz@qwest.net

**Eye of the Pacific Guide Dogs and Mobility Service**
747 Amana Street, #407
Honolulu, HI 96814
808-941-1088
www.eyofthepacific.org

Note: While great for Hawaiian residents, Eyes of the Pacific may be impractical for others because of quarantine laws.

**Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation**
103 Old Iron Ore Road
Bloomfield, CT 06002
860-243-5200
www.fidelco.org
Email: Info@fidelco.org

**Freedom Guide Dogs for the Blind**
1210 Hardscrabble Road
Cassville, NY  13318
315-822-5132
www.freedomguidedogs.org
Email: info@freedomguidedogs.org

**Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind**
371 East Jericho Turnpike
Smithtown, NY 11787-2976
800-548-4337
631-265-2121
www.guidedog.org
Email: info@guidedog.org

**Guide Dogs for the Blind**
P. O. Box 151200
San Rafael, CA 94915-1200
800-295-4050
350 Los Ranchitos Road
San Rafael, CA  94903
415-499-4000
32901 S.E. Kelso Road
Boring, OR  97009
503-668-2100
www.guidedogs.com
Email: information@guidedogs.com
Dog Guide Schools

Guide Dogs of America
13445 Glenoaks Blvd.
Sylmar, CA 91342
818-362-5834
www.guidedogsofamerica.org
Email: Mail@guidedogsofamerica.org

Guide Dogs of the Desert
P. O. Box 1692
Palm Springs, CA 92263
888-883-0022
www.guidedogsofthedesert.com
Email: info@gddca.org

Guide Dog Users, Inc.
14311 Astrodome Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20906
866-799-8436
301-598-2131
www.gdui.org
Email: requests@gdui.org

Note: Guide Dog Users does not train or place guide dogs, but acts as an independent resource network, providing information, support and advice concerning guide dogs, guide dog training and access laws to its members, the media and the public at large.

Guiding Eyes for the Blind, Inc.
611 Granite Springs Road
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
800-942-0149
914-245-4024
www.guidingeyes.org

Kansas Specialty Dog Service
124 West 7th
Washington, KS 66968
785-325-2256
www.ksds.org
Email: ksds@ksds.org

Leader Dogs for the Blind
1039 S. Rochester Road
Rochester, MI 48307
888-777-5332
248-651-9011
TTY: 248-651-3713
www.leaderdog.org
Email: leaderdog@leaderdog.org

Pilot Dogs, Inc.
625 West Town Street
Columbus, OH 43215
614-221-6367
www.pilotdogs.org

Seeing Eye, Inc.
10 Washington Valley Road
Morristown, NJ 07963
973-539-4425
www.seeingeye.org
Email: info@seeingeye.org

Southeastern Guide Dogs, Inc.
4210 77th Street East
Palmetto, FL 34221
800-944-3647
941-729-5665
www.guidedogs.org
Email: info@guidedogs.org
## Driving Alternatives

Traveling with a vision impairment can be challenging. Below are a few suggestions to assist in maintaining your independence while making your travel experience smooth and stress-free.

### Taxi Travel:

Make sure you have your white cane with you so the taxi driver knows that you are visually impaired. Typically, a taxi driver only beeps his horn and waits for a response from the passenger-to-be. If your white cane isn’t visible, you might be expected to cross a busy street to get into the taxi. If you are able to call ahead, to request the taxi, you can inform the dispatcher that you are visually impaired and discuss instructions at that time.

### Bus and Train Travel:

Once again, make sure you have your white cane with you. When traveling on a bus, it is important to learn the route you will be taking, especially if you are changing the destination. Your local Mass Transit Authority can help you figure out a new route. If you have useful vision, look for landmarks, but ask the driver to let you know when your reach your stop. As you travel the route more frequently, it will become easier.

Most individuals who are visually impaired have a disability low-fare picture ID card that entitles them to ride the bus at a reduced fee. Make sure have your pass and any necessary change ready so you won’t hold things up when you get on the bus. Ask the driver questions, if necessary, but try to get organized in advance, because the drivers have many people to deal with.

When using the train, be prepared to move quickly and get on or off when the doors open. It is a good idea to count the stops, between the starting location and the destination, in case the stops are not announced.

### Mobility Service:

Many buses have wheelchair lifts, but you can also use a mobility service. These are generally available if you live within a 3/4-mile radius from a fixed bus route. Schedule your rides at least 24 hours in advance so that you have time to plan for a late departure or arrival at your destination.

You can get more details on a mobility service by calling your local bus or transit office.
Driving Alternatives

**Friends and Family:**

Good friends and loyal family members can be a blessing when it comes to traveling to appointments and/or meetings. Always keep a positive attitude, even when your request for transportation is denied. If you are asked to travel along with a friend or family member, try to, make yourself available at a minutes notice, since their schedule may be just as hectic as yours.

- When moving to a new residence, consider a location that is close enough to work, grocery store, drug store, restaurants, churches, movies, etc., so you can easily walk or have little trouble getting rides.

- Some churches provide transportation as part of their outreach ministries.

- Barter your services for transportation. For example, help a friend with the children to give them a chance to run errands. Help out with gasoline for the vehicle or take that friend out to lunch or dinner every once in a while.

- If your finances allow, consider hiring someone to drive you to and from various destinations. Discuss with the driver whether he or she wants to be paid by the hour or by the number of miles traveled.

- Look into getting a handicapped-parking sticker. This way you can help the people driving you, because they will be able to find closer parking and you won’t have to walk as far, either at night or in bad weather. Of course, this will benefit the driver too.

A visually impaired person might want to take advantage of mail order companies or home shopping networks, either by television or the internet. Contact businesses that you frequent about having your order delivered.
Night Vision Aids are devices that benefit people with night blindness. While they cannot correct the eye condition, they can amplify the light and enable people to use their daytime vision to their best advantage.

Following is a list of companies that manufacture and/or sell Night Vision Aids. Please contact each company for more detailed information.

**Fujinon, Inc.**  
10 High Point Drive  
Wayne, NJ 07470  
800-872-0196  
www.fujifilmusa.com

**Global Supply Co., Inc.**  
1179 Finch Avenue West, #204  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3J-2G1  
416-739-7469  
www.globalindustrial.com

**B.E. Meyers & Co., Inc.**  
14540 N.E. 91st Street  
Redmond, WA 98052  
800-327-5648  
425-881-6648  
www.bemeyers.com

**Nightline, Inc. (Distributors for Litton Electron Devices)**  
13501 S.W. 128th, Unit 217  
Miami, FL 33186  
305-598-5357  
www.nightline-inc.com

**Stano Components, Inc.**  
PO Box STANO  
Silver City, NV 89428  
775-246-5281  
www.stano.night-vision.com

**SWFA**  
420 Century Way, #100  
Red Oak, TX 75154  
972-726-7348  
www.SWFA.com
# Night Vision Aids

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<tr>
<th>Retail Dealers:</th>
<th>Check you phone book for local listings.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fred Meyer Alaska (Alaska)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price/Costco Stores</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam’s Clubs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports Authority</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SportsMart (California and Illinois)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sharper Image</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Catalog Dealers:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brigade Quartermaster</td>
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<tr>
<td>800-338-4327</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabela’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>800-237-4444</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damark</td>
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<td>800-729-9000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>800-447-1001</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quartermaster</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>800-444-8643</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sharper Image</td>
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<tr>
<td>800-344-4444</td>
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Search “night vision” on the internet. Many other dealers have online offers for catalogs and often describe the equipment along with pricing information.

Night vision devices can also be found through Marine/Nautical suppliers.
Tips For Traveler

1. Make travel arrangements well in advance of your trip. If you need any assistance during your trip, inform the travel or ticket agent at the time you purchase your ticket. Define what type of assistance will be needed and when. For example, you may need an escort to the boarding area of the airport or train station. State exactly what you think you will need to avoid confusion and frustration during your trip. If you have special diet requirements, this is the appropriate time to inform the ticket agent. The airlines and train carriers are very willing to provide assistance to their passengers.

2. If you will be traveling with a service animal (i.e. dog guide, signal dog), inform the ticket agent when you make your reservations. This information is needed to provide for an appropriate space for the animal. It is always wise to ask about the carrier’s policy on service animals, especially if documentation is required. This advance information will help you to be prepared and avoid any problems during your trip.

3. Individuals with visual and/or hearing impairments often find that sitting in an aisle seat enables them to be more in touch with what is happening on the plane and to communicate more easily with the flight attendants. If you think this would be helpful to you, request an aisle seat when you make your reservations. Confirmation of this seat may need to be made several weeks prior to departure, depending on your carrier.

4. Call several days before your departure date to confirm reservations and that the special assistance you requested will be available. This information should be noted in your reservation file in the carrier’s computer system.

5. For air and train travel, any individual who has requested special assistance should arrive at least 1 1/2 hours prior to the scheduled departure time, 2 1/2 hours for international travel. Upon arrival at the airport or train station, you should identify yourself to the personnel, either at curbside or at the ticket counter, and indicate what type of assistance you need. Remember, you have the right to refuse any assistance you are not comfortable receiving.
6. To avoid any problems or miscommunications, review your needs with the staff on the plane/train. Most often the staff will be well informed of your requirements, but it doesn’t hurt to double-check.

7. If you require assistance boarding and departing the plane/train, most likely you will be asked to board prior to other passengers and depart after other passengers. This is standard procedure with major carriers and is probably done to facilitate the flow of passengers. Inform the staff of any connections you must make so appropriate arrangements can be made. Remember to be patient. Boarding and disembarking are time-consuming activities for everyone involved.

8. It often helps to mark your luggage with a bright luggage tag. This may help you locate your luggage in the baggage claim area, or help the skycaps in identifying your bags.

9. Be rested and relaxed prior to your trip. If you can, have your suitcases packed a day or so before you leave. Remember to take care of all the security measures for your home, including having the newspaper and mail picked up and simulating when someone is home (i.e. timers on lights and radios).

10. Just as you did with the airline or rail carrier, inform the hotel of your needs. Let the reservation clerk know that you are a person who is visually and/or hearing impaired and what type of accommodations you will require.

11. Once you reach your destination, take a moment to find out the local emergency number – not all cities operate with the “911” emergency code. Familiarize yourself with the location of fire safety features, such as alarms, fire extinguishers and exits.

12. Remember to be flexible and willing to adapt to situations as they occur. Things often don’t go perfectly, but with a willingness to “go with the flow,” the time you spend traveling will be less stressful. If you can, find the humorous side of a situation and enjoy it. Laughing is good for the body and helps to reduce stress.

For additional information on travel, contact the Society for the Advancement of Travel for the Handicapped (SATH) at the following address:

SATH
347 Fifth Avenue, Suite 610
New York, NY 10016
Sighted Guide Techniques

The following Sighted Guide Techniques are compliments of The Maryland School for the Blind and the Greater Baltimore Medical Center.

Sighted guide technique refers to a method by which a visually impaired person and a sighted person can walk together safely and comfortably. Specific techniques and movements are prescribed to allow the pair to negotiate a variety of travel situations safely, comfortably, and efficiently.

The person who is visually impaired may be someone with partial sight or no sight. Many people who have reduced vision can move independently for the majority of the time but may need assistance in dark or unfamiliar areas.

Sighted guide technique requires a minimal amount of practice to master; however, it does require some time and effort. Once you are at ease with the technique, you will be able to negotiate most areas without interrupting your conversation and without unnecessary verbal directions. The experienced follower will be able to teach a novice guide quickly, and the experienced guide will be able to guide most visually impaired people with comfort.

NOTE: Throughout these instructions the sighted person will be referred to as the guide and the visually impaired person will be referred to as the follower.
Sighted Guided Techniques

CONTACT and GRASP

GUIDE: Touch the follower’s elbow, forearm or hand with the back of your hand.

FOLLOWER: Grasp the guide’s arm above the elbow with your fingers on the inside of the arm near the guide’s body and your thumb on the outside near you. Use a firm grasp, but do not use excessive pressure.

ALTERNATIVE GRASPS

When the follower is:

A. a child.

Follower: Grasp the guide’s wrist.

B. in need of some physical support.

Guide: Bend your arm at the elbow.

C. much taller than the guide.

Follower: Rest your hand on the guide’s shoulder.
Sighted Guided Techniques

**STANCE**

**GUIDE:** Stand with your arm relaxed at your side or bent at the elbow.

**FOLLOWER:** Your arm should be bent at the elbow, placing you one half-step behind the guide. Keeping the elbow bent for long periods of time can be uncomfortable for the guide. Experienced guides and followers can often travel just as well with the guide’s hand dropped to a vertical position.

**NOTE:** Walk at a pace that is comfortable for both people. The guide should not be “dragging or towing” the follower, and the follower should not be pushing the guide.

**NARROW PASSAGE**

**GUIDE:** Continue facing forward, move your arm diagonally across your back.

**FOLLOWER:** Straighten out your arm and move directly behind the guide, thus following effectively in single file.
Sighted Guided Techniques

DOORS

**GUIDE:** Tell the follower if the door needs to be pushed or pulled and whose side the hinges are on. Begin opening the door. Let the follower hold the door, if indicated. A simple statement such as, “Your door,” will alert the follower as to the need for an appropriate action.

**FOLLOWER:** If the hinges are on your side, maintain your grasp while supporting the door for yourself. If the hinges are on the guide’s side, place your free hand above your original grasp as if you are beginning to change sides. Brace the door with your (newly) freed hand. When you have passed through the door, reverse this process and assume your original grasp.

STAIRS

**GUIDE:** Stop just before the stairs. Tell the follower if the stairs go up or down. Allow the follower to use the handrail if possible. Move your arm forward, bringing the follower to the edge of the stairs. The follower will be beside you. Step onto the first step ahead of the follower. Stop at the end of the stairs. Tell the follower that you are at the end.

**FOLLOWER:** Bring your toes to the edge of the stairs. Start a full step after the guide. With time and experience, both the guide and the follower will become comfortable with a brief pause instead of full stops and with a minimum of verbal directions. A simple statement such as, “Stairs down or stairs up,” will suffice.
### Sighted Guided Techniques

**TURNING AROUND or ABOUT FACE**  
(to turn in a small space, or to avoid confusing the follower)

**GUIDE:** Ask the follower to “about face.” Turn in to face the follower. Offer your other arm. Complete the turn once the follower has grasped your arm.

**FOLLOWER:** Face the guide. Contact the guide’s other arm. Release your original grasp. Assume the normal grasp on the new arm.

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**CHANGING SIDES**  
(before stairs or to avoid an obstacle)

**GUIDE:** Ask the follower to change sides. Bring your arm behind you.

**FOLLOWER:** Grasp the guide’s arm with your free hand above your other hand. Release your original grasp and slide that hand across the guide’s back to the free arm. Bring your second hand across to the guide’s other arm. Assume the normal grasp position.
**Sighted Guided Techniques**

**SITTING**

**GUIDE:** Position the follower in, so that the follower’s knees touch the front of the chair. For some followers it may be helpful to describe the back and arms of the chair.

**FOLLOWER:** Bend to the chair, sweep the seat with one hand, locate the arms and sit.

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**CARS**

**GUIDE:** Guide the follower to the door handle, indicate front or back door, and indicate which way the car is facing.

**FOLLOWER:** Locate the frame above the open door with one hand and the door handle with the other. Sweep the seat with your hand before sitting. BUCKLE UP!!