

*“There is probably no other mobility system as widely used as the human guide. Virtually all non-visual travelers use the human guide at some point. Newly blinded persons and/or the least skilled travelers may rely upon a guide most of the time, while the most skilled and more experienced travelers may rarely use a guide. When employed correctly a guide provides sufficient preview for safe travel in unfamiliar and uncontrolled environments.”*

-LaGrow and Long  
Orientation & Mobility:  
Techniques for Independence



*The mission of Leader Dogs for the Blind is to empower people who are blind or visually impaired with lifelong skills for safe and independent daily travel.*



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**LEADER DOGS**  
FOR THE BLIND

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# Human Guide Techniques



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# Human Guide Techniques

## BASIC HUMAN GUIDE METHOD

1. Guide asks traveler if he needs assistance and then contacts the back of the traveler's hand with the back of her hand.
2. Traveler moves his hand up the guide's arm and grips the guide's arm just above her elbow. Traveler decides which arm they'd like to hold.
3. Traveler walks a half step behind the guide.



## NARROW PASSAGEWAYS

1. Guide verbally indicates a narrow passage is ahead.
2. Guide moves arm toward the small of his back.
3. Traveler extends arm (to avoid stepping on the guide's heels) and moves directly behind the guide. Guide can extend his arm for more space.
4. After narrow passage is passed, guide returns his arm to the original position.



## CHANGING DIRECTIONS

1. Guide verbally indicates the need to turn in the opposite direction.
2. Guide initiates the turn by stepping in front of the traveler.

## TRANSFERRING SIDES

1. Guide or traveler indicates the need to transfer sides.
2. Traveler trails the guide's back with her free hand and establishes the original position on the guide's opposite arm.

## DOORWAYS

1. Guide indicates in which direction the door swings open (*Traveler needs to be on the hinge side of the door, so it may be necessary to transfer sides*).
2. When guide opens the door, the traveler assumes a forearm protective position.
3. Traveler will contact the door and push it further open. Guide confirms that the traveler has control of the door and then releases the door.
4. Traveler will release the door once he has cleared it and then resumes the original position.



## TARGETING

1. Guide brings the traveler close to desired object.
2. Guide places her hand on the object and the traveler trails his hand down the guide's arm to locate the object.

## STAIRS AND CURBS

1. Guide approaches step/curb and verbally indicates to the traveler that they are approaching ascending or descending stairs/curbs.
2. Guide pauses at the first step and the traveler moves alongside the guide.
3. Guide takes the first step and the traveler follows one step behind.
4. Guide pauses at the end of the stairs to indicate the last step, and then resumes the original position and pace.



## OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS

Communication is most important when using the human guide technique. Do not be afraid to offer assistance, but do not force it upon anyone. It is the guide's responsibility to communicate location, surrounding environment, terrain changes, etc. It is very important to be alert—judgment and timing of movements are the guide's responsibility. Never leave the traveler without informing him that you are doing so.

*If the traveler has a guide dog, he may prefer to "follow." Ask the traveler's preference and follow his instructions. If the traveler elects to be guided, he should drop the harness handle to signal to his dog that it is off duty.*



**People First Language** puts the person before the disability, because visual impairment is just one characteristic of the person.

For example: "Peter is a man who is blind," not "Peter is a blind man."