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## **Fact Sheet 2**

## **Written and Verbal Communication**

Communication is an important consideration, particularly if a person cannot see body language, facial expression and gestures.

There is no need to verbally provide every detail in a particular situation as this can be confusing and difficult to remember.

Image result for thought lightbulb image *It is ok to ask a person about their vision loss and what kind of help they need. Most people will be able to describe what they can and cannot see and let you know how you can help, or if they do not need help.*

## **How you can help with verbal communication**

1. Introduce yourself and say your name. *“Hi Liz, it’s Sandra here”.*
2. Ask. “Can you please let me know what kind of help you will need when I take you grocery shopping today”?
3. Use words such as left, right, in front, behind. Avoid using “over here” or “over there”. “Liz, the tomatoes on your left are $4.00 per kilo and the vine ripened tomatoes on your right are $6.00 per kilo”.
4. If someone you are helping also has a hearing loss, speaking clearly, slowly and finishing your words can help. Give extra time to be understood, communicate in a quiet environment before leaving home, or in the car before entering a noisy environment.
5. When in a group situation, say the person’s name to gain their attention before speaking. *“Liz, would you like a cup of coffee”.*
6. Use the clock face to describe directions. “Liz, your coffee is on the table at 12 o’clock.”
7. Let the person know if you are leaving or moving away *“Liz, will you be ok here while I leave and bring the car around?”* Avoid leaving someone standing in an open space; ask them if they would like to sit down or move to a more comfortable position.

**PTO**

1. If you are serving a person with vision loss who is with a companion, speak directly to the person with vision loss. *“I have your change / receipt ready”*. Count the change aloud and offer the receipt and product to them personally, unless indicated otherwise.
2. Provide verbal detail in stages and as a natural part of your conversation.
3. Asking a blind person to identify who you are by the sound of your voice, without saying your name, is not generally considered helpful.

Image result for thought lightbulb image *Please feel free to introduce yourself and say hello if you see a person with vision loss or blindness in the community. They may not be able to see you to start a conversation, so a friendly hello or quick chat might just make their day.*

## **Written Communication**

Many ‘tech’ options are now available for those who are unable to see standard print including when using a computer, tablet or mobile phone.

Blind and vision impaired users can harness technology as readily as the sighted population; problems arise if a particular technology has not been designed to cope with things like audio feedback.

Screen readers can now ‘talk the text’ aloud to the user and the user can respond by typing and hearing their words back in audio format.

There are programs, Apps and devices which also have the capacity to enlarge text and other features.

Braille is still used by some people, but not all. There is technology available which can transcribe Braille, so that sighted people can read the document in normal text.

Touch screens can present much greater difficulties and this is becoming an increasing challenge as they are used more widely in the community.

Image result for thought lightbulb image *If offering to assist a person with using their computer, be aware they may have assistive technology installed.*

**How you can help with written communication.**

1. Ask the person how they manage written communication.
2. For some people making things Bigger, Brighter and Bolder helps. Here are some examples below.
3. Whether handwriting or using a computer, black text on a plain white background is a good starting point. Some people will be able to let you know what size and colour print they prefer.
4. For short notes and lists, use a medium thick black felt pen on matt white paper. Write in larger text and avoid using all capital letters. Good contrast is key.
5. Use a photocopier to enlarge a document and therefore magnify the page.
6. Good lighting can assist a person to maximise the use of their remaining vision for reading.