

Tips to make the airport experience more inclusive

Airports aren't exactly a relaxed environment. The time pressures, finding the right check in desks and getting to the right gate can be stressful. Imagine what it's like going into an airport with blindness and low vision.

Thankfully there are many easy things you can do to make the experience more inclusive to travellers with a vision condition.

Here are some things to consider when helping travellers who are blind or have low vision:

1

Departures – Don't be afraid to ask if someone needs help

Passengers who are blind or have low vision will find this part of airport travel the hardest and most stressful.

Remember, they may have difficulty accessing information on departure screens to find out where to check in or at which gate and when to board.

Getting your help at this stage will make a huge difference for someone with a vision condition.



2

Check-in, queuing and IDs

Finding the queue entrance is difficult. Check if the passenger would like your guiding assistance. If they do, ideally, guide the passenger to the front of the queue, or line up with them to help them through the sectioned area.

Just remember, people who are blind don't have drivers licences, so expect to see other forms of ID when they are checking in. (ie passport, state based ID card).

Guiding techniques

1. Offer your elbow. If the traveller would like help, brush your elbow against their hand or arm.
2. They should lightly grasp your arm above the elbow.
3. Walk half a step ahead and look out for obstacles.

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Speak to the traveller directly, not their friend

If a passenger with a vision condition is traveling with someone, they should know the same information as their travel partner so they can make informed decisions.



4

Tell the passenger about next steps

For example, "Someone should be here in about 10 minutes to take you to the gate". By giving the traveller a timeline of what to expect means they can recognise if something is amiss.



5

Please don't bring out the wheelchair

A common mistake airport staff make is providing passengers who are blind or have low vision a wheelchair. Ask if they want a sighted guide to walk them to the gate, or if they prefer to use a buggy etc.



6

Finding the toilet or other amenities

Check if the person needs to go to the restroom, or pick up food etc throughout their journey. It's common courtesy.

If the passenger has a dog guide, ask if they would like to visit the dog relief area or help with getting items from the food court.

7

At the gate

Once at the gate, it's great to have someone from the gate staff acknowledge the traveller and explain next steps. For example, say "Hi you're at Gate D. Feel free to take a seat behind you. We should begin boarding in about 20 minutes. I'll come get you once we're ready." Remember to introduce yourself.

Be mindful a traveller who is blind might not realise that a gate has changed and might need some assistance to get to the new gate.

8

Dog guides

Remember, as cute as the dog guides are, they are working. They shouldn't be distracted so don't pat or engage with them.



At check-in the traveller can provide their handler's card which shows their dog is accredited and trained professionally as a service dog.

The airline must make provisions to allocate a seat next to the traveller for the dog guide (there should be no charge for the extra seat).