

## Meet us with combined vision and hearing impairment



Welcome to the world of people with combined vision and hearing impairment. We are sometimes also called deafblind, although very few of us are completely deafblind. With this leaflet we would like to encourage you to communicate with us. Most of us still hear and/or see to some extent. However, in dim light, it is difficult for us to see anything. Too bright light, again, can cause glare.

A person with combined vision and hearing impairment oftentimes moves independently, relying on sensory residuals. He may use assistive devices such as a white cane, anti-glare glasses, a guide dog, hearing aid or cochlear implant. When going out we with combined vision and hearing impairment often need assistance from another person. Here we invite you to step in, as anyone can act as a guide and help us move about safely. If needed, we will give you advice as we go.

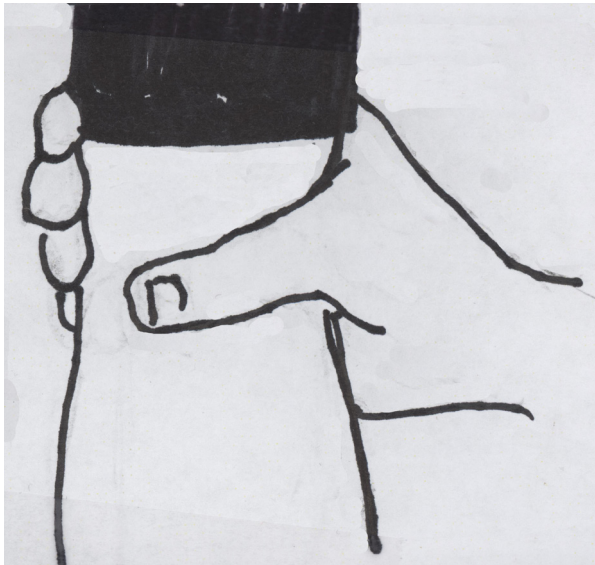
### Offer help

Confidently offer help, when you see a person standing with a white cane for example at a street corner. You can approach him gently and ask if you can assist. If he can hear you, he will respond. If not, you can take contact by gently touching his arm with the back of your hand.



### Guiding

You can help a deafblind person to move about safely and smoothly with these practical advice: Guiding is a joint effort of both you and the deafblind. Let him choose which side of you he prefers to walk on. He will then take a so-called bottle grip of your upper arm above the elbow. When you start walking he follows half a step behind you. Please slightly lift your guiding arm's shoulder before any obstacle ahead, such as stairs, doors, etc. because prior knowledge of the surroundings is helpful to him. It is also helpful for him to keep the white cane as a marker even when walking with a guide. This improves his safety but also helps the guide.



## Communication

Most people with combined vision and hearing impairment can speak and hear with the help of a hearing aid. Some of us use sign language.

If you don't share a common language, you can always write a message on the deafblind person's hand using block letters.



If a deafblind person has a hearing aid and cannot hear you, try to move to a quieter spot. A noisy environment sometimes makes it difficult to distinguish words, as the hearing aid may amplify all sounds. If you see he has a hearing aid in only one ear, speak from that side.

### *The Alphabet in Finnish Sign Language*



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**Finnish Deafblind Association**