

# Giving great service to customers with visual impairment



**Tips for  
better  
customer  
service**



# Welcoming a customer with visual impairment

Like anyone, someone impacted by vision impairment will love receiving great customer service and will return to venues where they enjoyed the experience.

You can earn the loyalty of a return customer by making them feel comfortable, cared for, and treated with respect.

## Make a great impression



First impressions are vital. You could make someone's day by politely offering help, and letting your customer with visual impairment (V.I.) know you are there to make their visit comfortable.





# Where to seat someone with visual impairment?

Asking customers with visual impairment about where they prefer to sit can greatly improve their experience at your café or restaurant.

## Questions you can ask:

### Question #1:

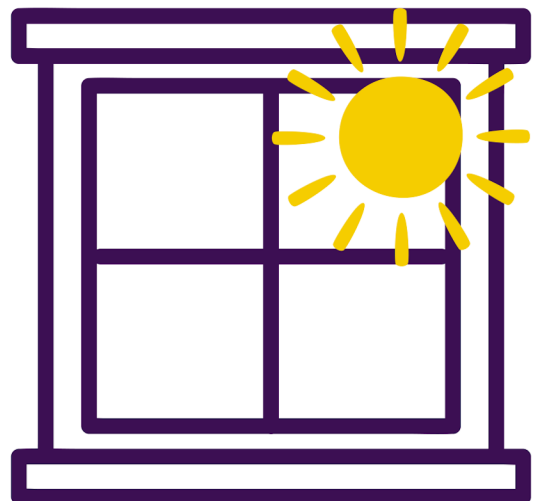
“Would you prefer to sit near a window, or away from bright light?”

### Why this matters:

People with some functional sight may prefer a brightly lit area, as this can improve their remaining vision.

However, some customers may prefer to avoid bright light, as the glare from sunlight can hinder their usable vision.

Other people will not have a preference. You can provide great customer service simply by asking and considering this factor.





# Where to seat someone with visual impairment?

## Question #2:

"Our bathroom is located at.....  
[insert description].

"Would it be helpful to have a  
table near it?"



## Why this matters:

Some people with sight loss may like to sit near the bathroom so they can reach it easily and discretely, and won't need to pass many obstacles to find it.

Other people may prefer to be in a quieter area, where customers are not passing by. For people with guide dogs, quieter areas may be the better option.



# Guiding to a seat

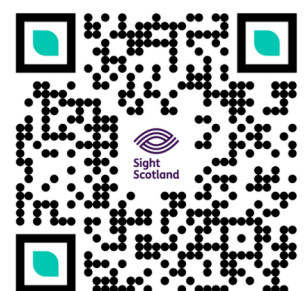
You can use the “sighted guiding” technique to guide a customer with vision impairment to their seat.

## How to be a sighted guide:

- The customer being guided will stand behind you and to the side.
- The customer being guided will grip your upper arm, just above your elbow.
- Keep your elbow close to your body. You can guide them to their seat, with them travelling behind you.



Our rehab team can offer training for sighted guiding. Give them a call on 0131 285 7488. **Check out our full sighted guide 'how to' here:**



SCAN ME



# Indicating to the table and chair

- Once you reach their table, put your guiding hand on the table's edge.
- Your customer with V.I. will run their hand down your arm, to reach the table.
- You can indicate the back of their chair in the same way.





# Describe the menu

Remember, your customer won't be able to read all the options on your menu. This is your opportunity to ask for their preference and customise a meal they enjoy and return for!

## Quick tips

- Ask the customer what sort of meal or drink they feel like.
- Describe the options that might appeal.
- Any specials or the soup of the day can be mentioned too – remember, customers with visual impairment won't see the specials board.



# Offer an accessible menu

## Large Print

A Large Print menu can be much easier to read for customers with some usable vision.

### Large Print menus will have:

- Size 16 pt font, or larger
- **Bold text**
- A simple font: Arial or Tahoma
- Left-aligned text
- Black text on white paper, or black text on yellow paper.

## Braille

Braille is a tactile language system, where letters are represented by raised bumps. A specialist embossing printer is needed to print a page of braille.

Want to have your menu printed in braille? The Scottish Braille Press can print your menu in braille.

**You can get in touch with our friendly team via the QR code or by calling 0131 229 1456.**



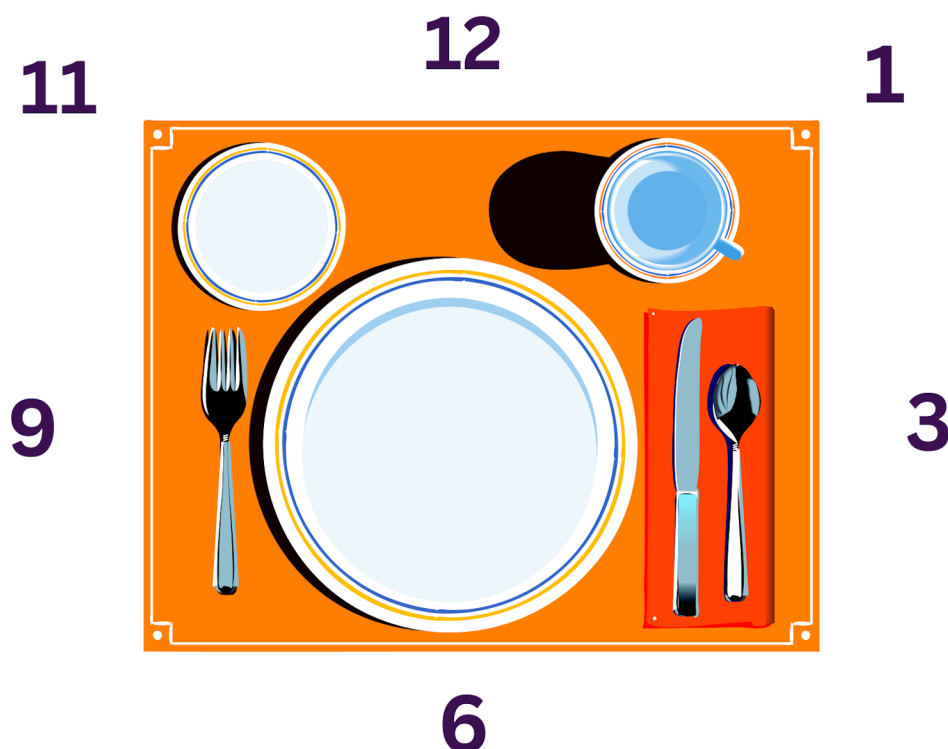


# Describe the table setting

- Chatting with your customer when you're setting the table is a great way to advise where cutlery and items are located.
- You can say: "Shall I just describe where I'm putting the cutlery and condiments?"
- One option is to describe the location of items in reference to their plate, as if their plate is a clockface.

For example:

- "I've put a glass of water down at the top of your plate, at your 1 o'clock."
- "Your knife is on the right, at your 3 o'clock."
- "Your fork is on the opposite side, at 9 o'clock."
- "I have put a ramekin of mayonnaise at your 11 o'clock."



# Serving drinks

Before passing a drink, ask your customer for their preference: Would they prefer their drink be placed in their hand, or placed on the table?

- A good place to put down a drink is at the top of the plate – at the 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock position. Remember to advise customers of its location.
- Hot drinks can cause scalding if knocked, so it's especially important to make customers aware of a hot drink's location.
- Straws can make drinks with ice much easier to consume, and minimise the chance of spillage.





# Serving the meal

Please take great care when serving food, and ask customers with vision impairment to pull back their hands from the table.

- Once the plate is tabled, you can offer to describe their meal. Start this conversation with something like “Would you like me just go through with you what’s on the plate?”
- Always start with what’s at 12 o’clock and work clockwise - don’t dot about from 9 o’clock to 2 o’clock etc. If it’s a dish with a lot of liquid, such as a curry, describe in as much detail as you can where everything is.

## Condiments:

- Your customer might not be able to see well enough to open a sachet of condiments, or know if it's on the table.
- You can ask if they'd like mayonnaise, ketchup or BBQ sauce added to the side of their plate.
- Or, you can empty the sachets into a small ramekin, place it on the table, and describe where it is.

# Dropped food

For customers with visual impairment, there can be risk of dropped food at mealtimes. If you can, keep an eye on your customer for any spillages on the table. Don't make a fuss of it.

If you need to quietly clear up a spillage on the table, just let them know that you're "clearing some items" and quietly wipe away what's necessary.





# Paying the bill

Please offer to read out the bill for your customer. It will help them to mentally tally what was ordered during their meal. You can discretely give them the total of the bill at the end. You can offer to call a taxi - particularly if your customer came by themselves.

# Farewelling

When you say goodbye to the customer, remember to remind them of your name. For example: “We hope to see you again. Hopefully I’ll be on duty again - my name is [your name]”.

This is really important. Firstly, it humanises their experience and secondly, it seals the bond of trust.



You have worked hard to make their experience the best it can be.

You may have earned a repeat customer who returns for the same kind and considerate service. Thank you for your kindness and your efforts.



# Key points at your venue

We thought it may be useful for you to take notes of key points at your venue where you can optimise your customer service for people with V.I. Remember, we are always here to ask anything if you need to - just give our fantastic rehab team a call on 0131 285 7488.






# About Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans

We support people living with sight loss in Scotland. We fund vital research, aim to prevent sight loss for many. We are actively campaigning for V.I. awareness to be considered in government policy and helping to shape the rights of people living with disabilities in Scotland.

Sight Scotland has been providing support for people who are blind or visually impaired for more than 230 years. We provide support, learning, and care. We also own the Scottish Braille Press which can band accessible formats for anyone impacted by vision impairment across Scotland.

Sight Scotland Veterans support veterans with sight loss, assisting them and their families to adapt to the impact of visual impairment. We enable veterans to regain confidence, restore independence and make new connections.



Thank you to Swanston Brasserie, Edinburgh for collaborating with us on this guide to giving great customer service for people who are blind or visually impaired.



**Sight  
Scotland**

Established in 1793



**Sight Scotland  
Veterans**

Established in 1915

**Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans are sister charities both dedicated to our mission: to reach everyone in Scotland with sight loss - where and when they need us.**

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## **Contact us**

### **Sight Scotland**

Call our Support Line on: 0800 024 8973.

### **Sight Scotland Veterans**

Call our Information Line on: 0800 035 6409.

Sight Scotland Scottish Charity Number SC017167.

Sight Scotland Veterans Charity Number SC047192.