

## Tips to help you communicate with a person with sight loss and dementia

Sight loss and dementia can affect people differently. Everyone has a unique experience and it will change over time. These tips are general and need to be adapted for each person, as a consequence.

**When using the top tips on the following page, it is important to:**

- Use the individual's senses such as smell, touch and taste to enhance communication e.g. cooking smells can indicate meal times.
- Be careful not to overload someone with too much information.
- Combine verbal and visual cues, if appropriate.
- Be aware of the importance of tone of voice, body posture, facial expression and how these can be interpreted.
- Remember someone with sight loss may adopt different postures, or head positions, to enable them to see better.

**Do the following to create the optimum environment:**

- Minimise noise, competing sounds and other distractions.
- Minimise "visual clutter" in the immediate environment and personal attire. Avoid highly patterned furnishings and clothing.
- Ensure lighting levels are consistent, even and controllable.
- Eliminate glare and shadows.
- Increase contrast in key areas.

**There are at least quarter of a million people in the UK living with sight loss and dementia.**

## Tips to communicate with confidence

1. Gain an understanding of the impact of someone's experience of sight loss. If they have some vision, position yourself where you can best be seen.
2. The four Cs for glasses: check they are **Correct, Current, Clean** and **Comfortable**.
3. Gain a person's attention by using their name, introduce yourself and say what you do.
4. In a group conversation, always make it clear who you are, who you are speaking to, introduce any other people present.
5. Tell a person when you are moving away from them or leaving the room.
6. Speak clearly using uncomplicated, short sentences. Give one idea, ask one question, or make one request at a time. If appropriate, combine verbal and visual cues.
7. Follow the OWL principle: Observe, Wait and Listen for responses. If necessary, repeat, reword or rephrase.
8. Use accurate and specific language when giving directions. Instead of "The kitchen is over there," you might say: "The kitchen is through the yellow door on the right, clearly signed".
9. When supporting someone tell them what you are going to be doing, before you do it and verbally reinforce this throughout.
10. Provide information in an alternative and accessible way, using formats such as audio, large print or braille.

 Sight Loss  
Advice Service

**We're here for everyone  
affected by sight loss.**

Get in touch with us on  
**0303 123 9999** or visit **rnib.  
org.uk/advice**

**You can also contact  
Alzheimer Scotland  
Helpline: 0808 808 3000  
Visit: [Alzscot.org](http://Alzscot.org)**