

Guiding a Runner who is Blind or Partially Sighted

Athletes who are blind or partially sighted compete within the sight classification system developed by the International Blind Sports Association. To ensure fair competition, athletes compete in a sport under one of the following three sight categories:

- B1** – From no light perception in either eye to light perception, but inability to recognize the shape of a hand at any distance or in any direction
- B2** – From ability to recognize the shape of a hand to a visual acuity of 2/60 and/or visual field of less than 5 degrees
- B3** – From visual acuity above 2/60 to visual acuity of 6/60 and/or visual field of more than 5 degrees and less than 20 degrees.

All B1 and B2 athletes are allowed the option of a sighted guide. In this situation the runner is allowed 2 lanes to run in and runner and guide must remain within these lanes for the duration of the event.

There are a few ways of guiding a runner who is blind or partially sighted and it is up to the runner and guide to decide which technique is most effective for them. All runners can receive verbal instructions from their guide runner.

- Tether
- Elbow Lead
- Run free

Tether Method

- A flexible, non-elastic material is held between the runner and the guide.
- Tether is approximately 50 cm in length
- This helps the runners to synchronize their strides and remain in close proximity.
- Guide runner is ½ to 1 stride behind the athlete.
- At no time is the guide allowed to push or pull the runner.
- Guide through verbal instruction.

- In competition runners and guides cannot be more than .5 metres away from each other

Elbow Lead Method

- Guide runner is behind the athlete
- Guide places hand between athlete's ribs and arm
- Gently guides runner with hand movement – movement to the right = move right; movement to the left = move left.
- Guide is not allowed to pull or push athlete
- Can also guide through verbal instruction
- In competition runners and guides cannot be more than .5 metres away from each other

Run Free Method

In competitions where the athlete is running alone against the clock, they may use up to two “callers” who call out directions.

- One caller must remain behind the finish line
- Call “555555” (or other verbal cue) along track for runner to follow the sound of the caller's voice
- Can also provide verbal correction to assist runner to stay within lane
- As runner passes the first caller, the first caller becomes silent and the second caller takes over calling.