



International Low Vision Support Group Step-by-Step Instructions for Facilitators

These detailed instructions are designed to help everything run smoothly. If you follow them carefully, your session will be a success for both you and your guests.

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OUR SHARED MISSION

The mission of the International Low Vision Support Group (ILVSG) is to assist leaders in providing human support and information for groups of senior adults around the world who are affected by macular degeneration and related diseases. The target audience is individuals who are not personally connected to the resources of the Internet, but all groups are welcome to participate.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES OF THE ILVSG

To maintain the intent and quality of the programs of the ILVSG and its affiliates, the following policies and procedures are established and agreed upon by all facilitators.

1. Meetings

- The facilitator will make every effort to hold meetings monthly and year-round, on a consistent day and time schedule.

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- The content of the meetings may be recorded presentation as provided by the ILVSG, but facilitators are encouraged to provide live programs when available.
- The facilitator or a qualified replacement will be in attendance at and during all meetings.
- The recorded programs are generally 20-30 minutes in length, with additional social/discussion time recommended before or after.

2. Equipment

Computers and audio/visual equipment will be maintained in good working order for best viewing and hearing of the presentations.

3. Materials

News announcements and other important information provided by the ILVSG will be shared expeditiously with all participants.

4. Advertising and Promotion

The facilitator will promote, wherever possible, the availability of their support group in the surrounding community and maintain an open invitation to all.

5. Additional responsibilities of the facilitator

- The facilitator will remain accessible to the ILVSG director by notifying him immediately of any changes in personal contact information.

YOUR FIRST MEETING (Checklist)

Three weeks ahead

() Fill in and mail the enclosed PRESS RELEASE to your local news media, and publish it in your center's newsletter.

Two weeks ahead

() Fill in and distribute the ADVERTISING FLYER. Send copies to your residents and their families, churches, senior organizations and eye clinics in your area. This is excellent advertising for the services and quality of your center.

() Begin compiling reservations by name, address and phone. This list is important for making reminder calls, sending flyers about future sessions, and knowing how many chairs and refreshments you will need.

One week ahead

() Check your computer. Be sure your speakers are turned on and working. Some of your guests may be hard-of-hearing, so be sure the volume of the computer is well-amplified. This can be as easy as placing a microphone from your house sound system or a portable amplifier next to the computer speaker.

() If projecting slide presentations (mp4 format), test your video display hookup. This can be video projection onto a screen or connection to a large-screen television or monitor. If you are not familiar with how to do that, contact a technician who can show you. It is not difficult. Video display is not essential, but it adds to the enjoyment and understanding of those who have functional vision.

() Display copies of the ADVERTISING FLYER in prominent locations around your center.

- () Copy printed material for each functionally-sighted guest.**
 - () Make announcements over loudspeakers, closed-circuit TV, and any other available media.**
 - () Acquire an assistant to help you on the day of the meeting. If you and your assistant are not experienced in working with the visually impaired, please take a moment to read the “Basic Courtesies for the Visually Impaired” from this kit.**
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On the big day

- () Organize the space. For small groups, we recommend arranging the chairs in a semicircle facing the computer or projection screen. A semi-circle makes it easier to approach each guest, and also makes everyone feel equally-involved. Simple refreshments (preferably finger food) are a nice welcoming touch.**
 - () Set up amplification equipment so everyone can hear you and the computer speaker with ease.**
 - () If playing slide presentations (mp4 format) set up your projector and screen or connect to a large screen television. (Large screen video display is optional.)**
 - () Prepare a check-in sheet to confirm attendance. This is for your records only. MD Support will never ask you for names or contact information for your guests.**
 - () Fill out large-print name tags. This is important so that you can call your guests by name. Remember, that is the only way many of them will realize that you are speaking personally to them.**
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When the session begins

- Greet each guest at the door, and hand them pre-printed name tags.**
- Orient new low-vision visitors to the layout of the area.**
- Ask your assistant to escort guests to their chairs when necessary.**
- Introduce new visitors.**

- **Review ground rules:**
 1. **Wait until called upon to speak.**
 2. **State name before speaking.**
 3. **Please arrive on time.**
 - **Introduce and play the presentation.**
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To access the presentation or document:

1. **Go to the ILVSG website at mdsupport.org/support/international-low-vision-support-group. (Bookmark that page for your future convenience.)**
 2. **Select “Affiliate Areas”**
 3. **Select “Enter Archives”**
 4. **Type the user name and password previously supplied by the ILVSG director, and select “Enter”.**
 5. **Scroll to and select the title. The selected recording will begin automatically or the selected document will appear.**
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After the presentation

- **Allow a brief discussion/social period. Refreshments may be served at this time. This is an important time for everyone to get to know one another and develop important social connections.**
- **Ask for comments about the session. Make notes of all pertinent remarks or questions for passing along to MD Support. Your feedback is appreciated!**
- **Thank everyone for attending, and announce the date and topic of the next presentation which you have planned or selected from the Archives.**
- **Optionally, end with a meditation, inspirational thought, or prayer.**

Sample press release

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

Page 1 of 1

PRESS RELEASE

Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____

Low Vision Support Group Session To Be Hosted By _____

Visually-impaired senior adults and their caregivers are invited to attend a unique support group for individuals with low vision. The group's first gathering will be held on _____, from _____ until _____ located at _____

The _____ Support Group provides monthly presentations about eye disease and living successfully with low vision. The topic of this month's session is " _____ " _____

To reserve a place, please call _____.

Basic Courtesies for the Visually-Impaired

These simple rules of etiquette will help you to avoid potentially embarrassing situations during your session. Your guests will appreciate your effort to make them feel as comfortable as possible.

- **Address us by name so we know you are talking to us.**
- **Speak directly to us, rather than through someone else.**
- **Greet us by giving your name so that we recognize you.**
- **Speak in a natural conversational tone. It is not necessary to speak loudly or to over-enunciate.**
- **Feel free to use words that refer to vision. We also use the words "see," "look," "watch," etc. And remember, we are not offended by the term "blind."**
- **Be calm and clear about what to do if you see us encountering a dangerous situation. Saying "stop," for example, is better than saying, "watch out."**
- **If you think we need assistance, ask first. Don't assume that help is needed.**
- **When offering assistance, never take hold of us uninvited. Simply make the offer, and let it be our decision.**
- **Never take hold of a white cane.**
- **Never pet or distract a guide dog while it is on duty.**

Helpful Free Publications

Available in print and online from
lowvision.preventblindness.org/publications

A Self Help Guide to Non-visual Skills

(Large print, 89 pages. Available in English and Spanish)

This guide is a culmination of ideas from professionals and patients showing how a visually impaired person can preserve or restore up to 99% of all activities of daily living. The book features a comprehensive self-evaluation of needs and goals, followed by lessons showing how nonvisual senses can substitute for eyesight. It also contains an in-depth overview of low vision rehabilitation, plus directories of distributors of low vision devices, technology products, and software.

Through Our Eyes

(Large print, 111 pages)

Essays and poetry by people from the low vision community. Selected from two decades of contributions to MD Support. An excellent source of inspirational material for support groups. Includes 15 poems and 19 essays on a variety of topics.

Visual Skills Workbook For People with Age-Related Macular Degeneration

(Large print, 62 pages. Available in English and Spanish)

Leslie Burkhardt, MSLVR, has created easy-to-follow lessons designed to help people use their vision better to see objects, to read, and to write. Designed for people with macular degeneration who can read at least 50 large-print words, with or without a magnification device, without excessive struggle.

Caring for the Visually Impaired

(12 page booklet. Available in English and Spanish)

This unique handbook is full of helpful information and resources for the informal caregiver. A comprehensive listing of caregiving resources may be found on the final page.

Living Well With Low Vision: Miscellaneous Thoughts

(Large print, 106 pages)

A compilation of 30 inspirational, humorous, and educational writings by Dan Roberts, Editor-in-Chief, Prevent Blindness

“GuideMe” customized resources for Age-Related Macular Degeneration and Diabetic Retinopathy

(Online interactive format)

New self-help books that know you personally! By filling out a brief questionnaire, you customize your own resource to provide just the information you need, insight into unique challenges you may be facing, and practical steps toward protecting your particular quality of life and independence.

Contact Information

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(<https://eyesight.org/>)**