



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. Thank you for your help!

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Our Shared Mission

The mission of the International Low Vision Support Group (ILVSG) and its affiliates is to provide human support and timely information for groups of senior adults around the world who are affected by macular degeneration and related diseases leading to impairment of central vision. The target audience of the ILVSG is comprised of people who are not individually connected to the resources of the Internet, but all groups are welcome to participate.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

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

- a. The facilitator will make every effort to hold meetings monthly and year-round, on a consistent day and time schedule.
- b. The content of the meetings will, for the most part, be presentations provided by the ILVSG. Facilitators are, however, welcome to replace the scheduled offerings with alternate programs.
- c. The facilitator or a qualified replacement will be in attendance at and during all meetings.
- d. The Internet programs will be 20-30 minutes in length, with additional social/discussion time recommended either before or after.

2. Equipment

- a. Computers and audio/visual equipment will be maintained in good working order for best viewing and hearing of the presentations.
- b. If attending a live webcast, the facilitator or an assigned technician will arrive at least 20 minutes ahead of time to ensure a good Internet connection and sufficient audio level.

3. Materials

- a. Monthly newsletters provided by the ILVSG will be reproduced and distributed to all participants at each meeting.
- b. Additional materials or items provided by the ILVSG will be made readily available to the participants.

4. Advertising and Promotion

The facilitator will promote, wherever possible, the availability of the ILVSG in the surrounding community and maintain an open invitation to all. Advertising fliers and press releases are provided monthly for this purpose.

5. Additional responsibilities of the facilitator

- a. The facilitator will remain accessible to the ILVSG director by notifying him immediately of any changes in personal contact information.
- b. The facilitator will email periodic attendance and progress reports upon request.

PREPARATION 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.
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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.
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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.
- ❑ **Test your video display hookup if available.** 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 it, 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 the ILVSG Newsletter** for each guest. This will be emailed to you at the beginning of each month. It will contain important information about the current presentation, latest news about low vision research, and announcements of upcoming events. You may also include promotional material about your center.

- **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**” on page 9.

Before the session

- **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 speakers with ease.
- **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 know you are speaking to them.
- **To access past audio/visual presentation:**
 1. Go to the **Affiliates Area** of the ILVSG website at www.mdsupport.org/support/international-low-vision-support-group. Bookmark the page for your future convenience.
 2. Select “**Affiliate Areas Login**”
 3. Select “**Enter Archives**”
 4. Enter the user name and password supplied in your monthly newsletter, and click the “**Submit**” button.
 5. Scroll to the title you want, and select either:
 - a. “**View Online**” (to see and hear the presentation immediately),

- b. **“Download Files”** (to see and hear the presentation later offline), or
- c. **“Download MP3”** (to access the audio file only).

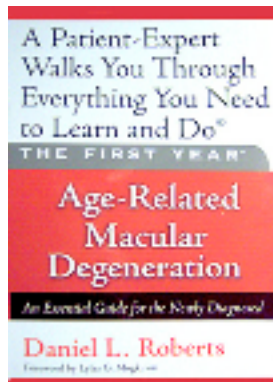
6. For help with downloading, see **“Instructions on downloading files for offline viewing”** and/or **“Instructions on downloading MP3 files for listening on your computer or portable player”** at the top of that page.

At the session

- **Greet each guest** at the door, and hand them the pre-printed name tags.
- **Orient new members** to the layout of the area.
- **Ask your assistant** to escort guests to their chairs when necessary.
- **Introduce** new members and guests.
- **Review ground rules**
 - One person speaks at a time.
 - State name before speaking
 - Expect to begin and end on time.
- **Introduce the presentation** (page 10).
- **During the presentation**, continually monitor the equipment for best volume and viewing.

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.
- **Distribute copies** of the ILVSG Newsletter and other handouts.
- **Ask for comments** about the session. Make note 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.
- **Provide a closing** meditation, inspirational reading, or prayer.



“The First Year: Age-Related Macular Degeneration”

An important book for understanding and living with low vision.
Official handbook of the International Low Vision Support Group.

**Available from bookstores and from
the Library of Congress Talking Books program**

The following pages contain resources for copying that will be helpful to you in planning and running your meetings.

PRESS RELEASE

Contact Name: _____ Phone: _____

International Low Vision Support Group Session To Be Hosted By

Internet conferencing technology is bringing together thousands of low vision seniors across the country with leading experts in the field.

_____ invites visually-impaired senior adults to attend a unique support group for individuals with low vision. The next gathering will be held on _____, from _____ until _____ at the center, located at _____.

The International Low Vision Support Group provides free monthly presentations about eye disease and living successfully with low vision. It is hosted by MD Support, a leading nonprofit organization offering information and help for people affected by macular degeneration and related eye diseases.

Since 2006, retirement centers, libraries, and senior organizations around the world have been participating in live presentations by experts in the field of eye care and treatment. The title of this month's session is "_____
_____, " featuring _____. Staff members from the center are on hand to facilitate the meetings and operate the computer.

To reserve a seat, call _____
at (____) _____.

**You are invited to a
Free Support Group Meeting
for
Visually Impaired
Senior Adults**

*Join thousands of people around the world
for this monthly series of Internet programs.*

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Location: _____

Reserve your seat by calling _____

This month's topic:

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

(To order, call 1-800-331-2020, ext 6018)

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.