Students who are blind or visually impaired often bring auxiliary aids and adaptive equipment to the classroom (e.g., dog or cane). These aids assist in gaining access to the classroom; however they do not ensure access. The classroom instructor is responsible for considering the needs of every student when teaching. For example, your instruction including lectures, website, videos, overheads, handouts, and textbook must be accessible to the students.

If you would like verification that a student has a disability, ask the student to provide you with an Academic Accommodation Plan from the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC produces these accommodation plans only for students who are registered with this office and for whom documentation of the disability is on file.

Students who are blind or visually impaired vary considerably. For example, some have no vision; others are able to see large forms; others can see print if magnified; and still others have tunnel vision with no peripheral vision or the reverse. Furthermore, some students with visual impairments use Braille, and some have little or no knowledge of Braille. They use a variety of accommodations, equipment, and compensatory strategies based upon their widely varying needs. Many make use of assistive technology, especially print to voice conversion using a scanner and voice production software. Textbooks are often converted and put on disks for later use. Others use audio textbooks or equipment to enlarge print (closed circuit television [CCTV]) or actual enlargements.

For more information please visit the UNLV Disability Resource Center website at unlv.edu/studentlife/drc

NOTE: This tip sheet is available in alternate format upon request. Please call the DRC at 702-895-0866.
Guidelines

**Preferential Seating:** Students with visual impairments may need preferential seating since they depend upon listening. Since they may want the same anonymity as other students, it is important that you avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to others in the class.

**Exam Accommodations:** Exam accommodations, which may include assistive technology, a reader/scribe and extra time, a computer, closed circuit TV (CCTV), Braille, enlargements, tapes, and/or image enhanced materials, may be needed. Coordinate these arrangements with the Disability Resource Center (DRC).

**Arranging for Accommodations:** A meeting with the student is essential to facilitate the arrangements of accommodations and auxiliary aids which may include, in addition to exam accommodations, access to class notes and/or the recording of lectures; print material in alternative format; a script with verbal descriptions of videos or slides, charts, and graphs, or other such visual depictions converted to tactile representations.

**Orientation to Classroom:** You may also ask the student if he/she would like an orientation to the physical layout of the room with locations of steps, furniture, lecture position, low-hanging objects or any other obstacles.

**Use of Language:** Although it is unnecessary to rewrite the entire course, you can help a visually impaired student by avoiding phrases such as “Look at this” and “Examine that,” while pointing to an overhead projection. Use descriptive language. Repeat aloud what is written on an overhead or chalkboard.

**Lab Assistance:** These students may need a lab assistant or lab partner in lab classes. Assist the student in identifying a lab assistant. If additional support is needed, contact the DRC.

**Print Material in Alternative Format:** Have copies of the syllabus and reading assignments ready three to five weeks prior to the beginning of classes. Students with visual impairments will likely need all print material in alternative format which means that they need print material converted to audio format or Braille, scanned onto disks, enlarged or image enhanced. Conversion of materials takes time. It is important that they have access to class materials at the same time as others in your class. Coordinate alternative format materials with the DRC.

**Guide Dogs:** Keep in mind that guide dogs are working animals. They must be allowed in all classes. Do not feed or pet a guide dog. Since they are working, they should not be distracted.

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