

Is it scary to be blind?



Hi, it's **Invincible Vinny** here! Some of you may know that I was born blind. My eyes don't see things. I can notice if a bright light turns on or off, but I can't see people, furniture, or other things around me. Instead, I find those things by how they feel or how they smell.

If you sit with your eyes closed, you will be able to see what I experience every day. If you are in a room with a bright light on, you may be able to see some light through your eyelids even when your eyes are closed. If someone turns the light off while your eyes are still closed, you may notice that it got darker. This is what I notice when a bright light turns on or off.

Some people are sad for me when they find out I can't see. They wonder if I'm scared all the time. I'm not scared to be blind. I know my person will keep me safe. I've learned where the steps and furniture are at my house so I hardly bump into things at all.

I use my other senses to find out about the world around me. I can feel where I am with my feet. The carpet in my house feels different than a wood floor, or than the grass outside. What I feel helps me to know where I am.



I use my sense of smell a lot. Dogs have very sensitive noses. I can smell where I am in my house or yard. I can smell where my dog friends are and where my toybox is. I can smell when my person is eating cheese so I can go ask for a bite!

Some dogs that are blind use their sense of hearing. When they hear sounds, it gives them clues about where they are and what is happening around them. My ears don't hear things, so I rely on my senses of touch and smell the most.

Other animals can be blind, and so can people. Do you know anyone who is blind? Some people can see a little bit and this is called a visual impairment. If you wonder what to do when you meet a person who is blind, just say hello! It's polite to let a person who can't see you know that you are nearby. If you meet a blind dog, please always ask the dog's person to show you the polite way to say hello to the dog.

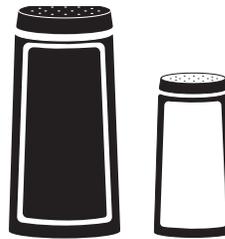


Sometimes a person who is blind will use a cane to help them feel something they might bump into or to find a step up or down so they don't trip. They hold the cane out a little bit in front of them on the ground. If the cane bumps into something, they know to stop and find out what is there.

Some dogs that are blind use a cane too. They don't hold their cane, but it helps them in the same way. The cane fits on the dog with a harness and sticks out in front of it. If the dog feels the cane bump into something, it learns to stop or go another way.



If you serve a meal to someone who can't see well, it's helpful to tell them where the different foods are on the plate. A good way to do this is to describe the food on the plate as if it was a clock. Do you see how the eggs are at 3 o'clock on this plate? The fork handle would be at 6 o'clock.

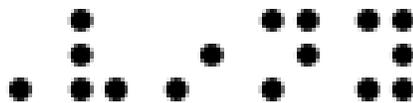


It's also helpful to make sure the salt and pepper shakers are different sizes. Here, the pepper is taller than the salt. This makes it easy for someone to feel which one is which.

There are very special dogs, called guide dogs that help lead people who are blind and keep them safe. The dogs lead the people around things that could be dangerous like holes in the sidewalk that might cause them to trip.



There is a special language that helps people who are blind to read books, menus and signs. It is called braille. Braille feels like small raised bumps. Each set of bumps is a letter, so when a person feels the bumps, they can read. Here is my name, Vinny, written in braille without the bumps raised.



Vinny

