

# Improving Care for DeafBlind Patients: Just-In-Time Tips and Resources



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DeafBlind individuals account for a heterogeneous population that includes varying degrees of vision loss, hearing loss, and additional disabilities. Communication modalities and test adaptations will differ widely between patients.

## Test Environment

Set up for success before testing starts.

- Reduce visual clutter
- Keep the path clear
- Allow time for exploration
- Communicate all changes



## Communication

Hands are the access to the world

- Know the primary mode of communication
- Always use a touch cue
- Use hand-UNDER-hand support

A **touch cue** is a gentle tap on the arm, shoulder, wrist, or body part that will be affected.

To be effective, touch cues should:

- Primarily occur on the body part that will be affected
- Done in a consistent manner before each activity or action

Limited access to visual and auditory cues can increase anxiety in DeafBlind patients. Establish **routines with clear beginnings, middles, and ends** to help DeafBlind patients anticipate events.

For example, during OAEs:

1. Touch cue on the ear to signal probe placement
2. Conduct the test
3. Touch cue on the ear to indicate probe removal
4. Tactile sign for "all done"

## Test Adaptations

Several basic test adaptations can be used throughout testing. However, it is important to remember that vision loss is a spectrum. **Strategies should be personalized to meet individual patient need.**

### Low vision

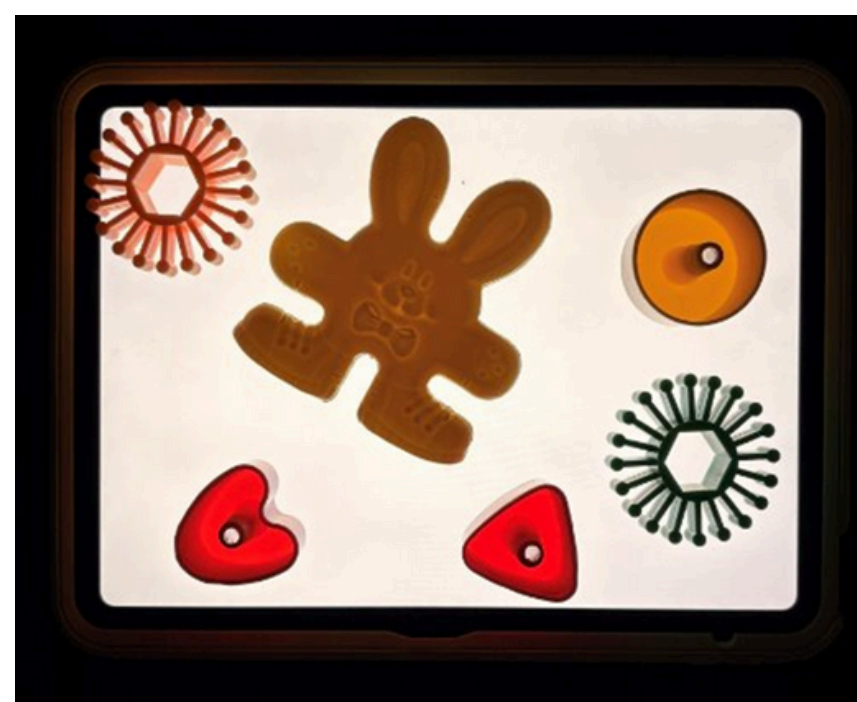
- Use large, high contrast toys
- Place colorful toys on a black background
- Model with hand-under-hand support
- Reduce glare

### Light Perception Only

- Use a light source and solid object
  - iPad and blocks
  - Flashlight
  - Light wand
- Consider tactile reinforcers



Example of a high-contrast VRA adaptation



Example of an iPad being used as a light box

### CVI

While certain behaviors are common among children with CVI, each child's needs are unique:

- May show color preferences (e.g., red, yellow)
- May have visual field deficits
- Light can be necessary for visual attention or be a distraction
- Movement may aid or hinder visual attention

### Resources

**Deafblind Projects:** Technical assistance, training, and family support from birth to age 22.

**ICanConnect:** Free communication equipment and training for individuals that meet disability and income guidelines.

**Helen Keller National Center:** Vocational rehabilitation programs and services nationwide throughout the lifespan.