



Royal Society for Blind Children

How can I help my toddler explore their surroundings?

For some children with vision impairment, moving around and exploring their surrounds can be a bit tricky at first. With your support your child can build their confidence and begin to safely explore and understand their world.

Orientation

Being orientated to and understanding the space you are in is essential for building confidence when exploring spaces. You can help your toddler develop this confidence by:

- Showing them around new spaces.
- Showing them key features of a room and letting them explore these.
- Talk about what they can see, hear, smell and touch when they are in a space, and explain what the things they notice mean.
- Talk about who and what is in a space with them.
- Pick a quieter time to go to a new place or space so it isn't so overwhelming.
- Ask them if they can work out where they are when there is a clue, e.g. They can hear a bath running or smell food cooking.
- Use directional language (to the left/right) and positional language (under/over/ in front/ behind) when exploring and moving around to help your toddler begin to learn these concepts.

Independent mobility

Once your child is up and walking it is time to encourage some independent exploration, some children may be keen to begin exploring, and others may want to continue to hold onto your hand. No matter what stage your child is at, there are lots of things you can do to encourage independent mobility:

- Offer a push along toy, such as a brick cart or a toy on a stick to push out in front of them, this will help them find obstacles in front of them.
- Give a directional instruction and tap the corresponding shoulder.
- Walk on different surfaces in the house and outside and talk about what you can feel.
- Have a treasure hunt at home and encourage some independent mobility in the house while you seek out your treasure together, looking behind the sofa or feel the chair.
- When you are walking outside explore tactile information when you are walking. Talk about the blister paving (raised bumps) when that is under your feet and what it means (a road crossing), or the corduroy paving (raised lines) and what that means (a hazard e.g., stairs).
- When you can, encourage your toddler to walk and get things themselves.

Using a cane

Canes are issued by a Qualified Habilitation Specialist. They will provide you with advice about whether a cane is suitable for your child, what sort of cane your child needs and they will teach your child how to use it. If your child does not have a Habilitation Specialist, speak to your QTVI or approach your local sensory service via your local council for more information.

Our Families First team of family practitioners are here to support you through your child's early years and into the future.

RSBC can help you with:

- practical advice about your child's development
- support when you feel overwhelmed.
- understanding your child's vision impairment better
- living as a family and being supportive of each other

Call 020 3198 0225 or email [**connections@rsbc.org.uk**](mailto:connections@rsbc.org.uk)

