

Karate and Visual Impairments

Advice for Instructors

ENGLISH KARATE



FEDERATION

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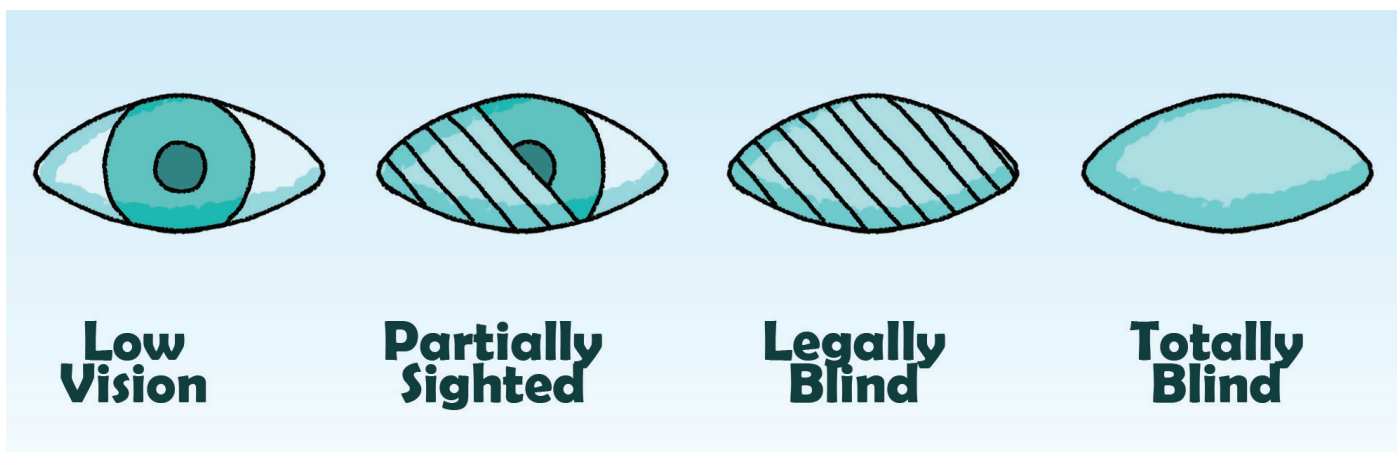
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Introduction

There are two terms regularly used to refer to people with a sight loss condition. These are severely sight impaired (blind) and sight impaired (partially sighted). The EKF and WKF uses the term 'visual impairment' to refer to all levels of sight loss. Throughout this resource a person with a visual impairment (either adult or child) is referred to as a 'VI karateka'.

Definition

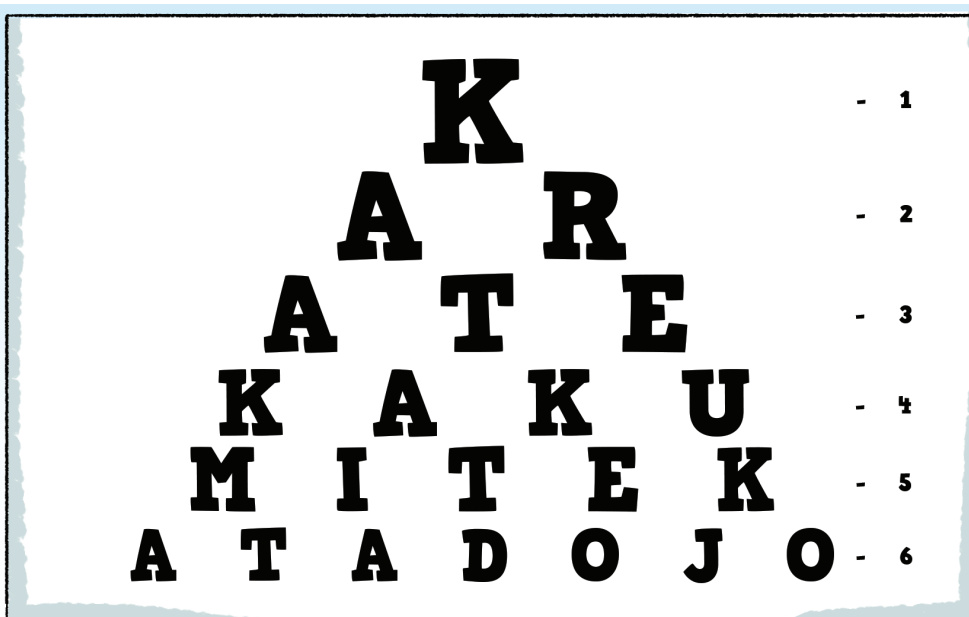
Visual impairments can be broadly defined as 'a limitation in one or more functions of the eye or visual system' (Source: RIDBC). It can be a condition present at birth, or something acquired later in life. A Visual Impairment is a broad-spectrum term encompassing low vision through to totally blind. The age or stage of onset that the visual impairment occurs will influence the individual's physical, psychological, and emotional development.



Sight level is classified on more than one measure. The main measures are visual acuity and visual field.

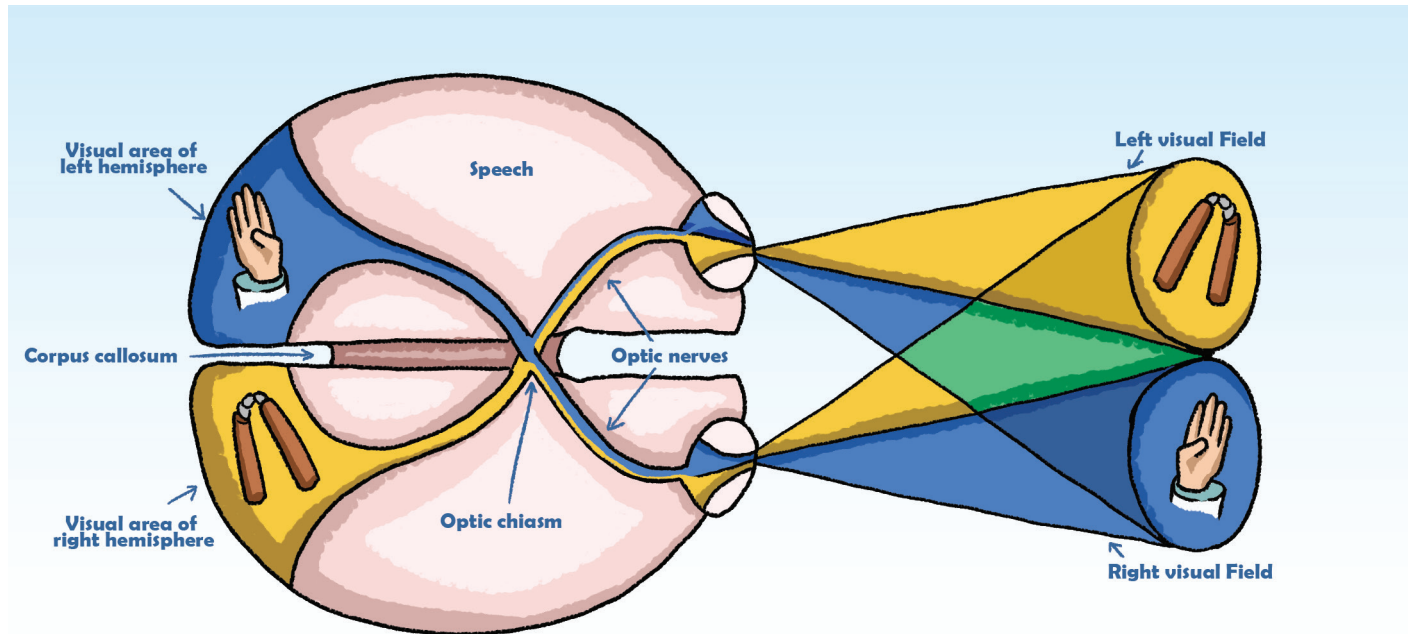
Visual acuity

A person's ability to see fine detail. For example, reading text is often tested by reading down an eye chart.



Visual field

The boundaries of what a person can see in one instant; the entire area which can be seen without moving the eyes.



Severely sight impaired

This category is also known as blind.

- Under government legislation, a person who is severely sight impaired would be unable to perform a job for which eyesight is an essential element for the task
- They will not be able to see a demonstration
- They may become quickly disorientated during an activity

Sight impaired

This category is also known as partially sighted

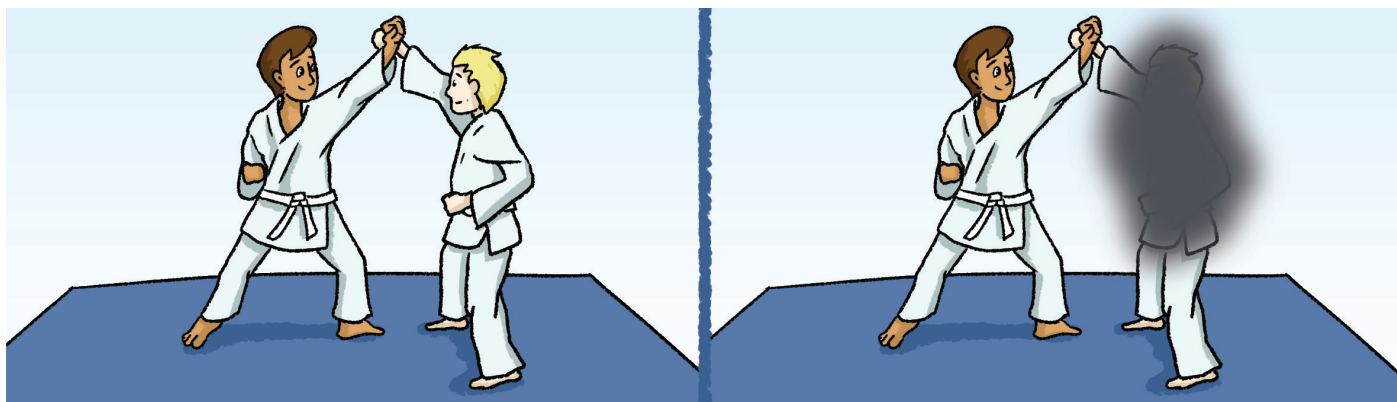
- Partially sighted people will have some useful vision that they can use to navigate the world
- They may not be able to see a demonstration due to light conditions or their position in relation to you
- They may not be able to recognise you from a distance

Eye condition examples

There are several conditions that result in a VI affecting people in profoundly different ways. The four main conditions are documented below with some visual representations. However, it is important to remember that everybody has different levels of vision and varying support needs; the crucial thing is to get to know the karateka and understand the impairment and effects upon them.

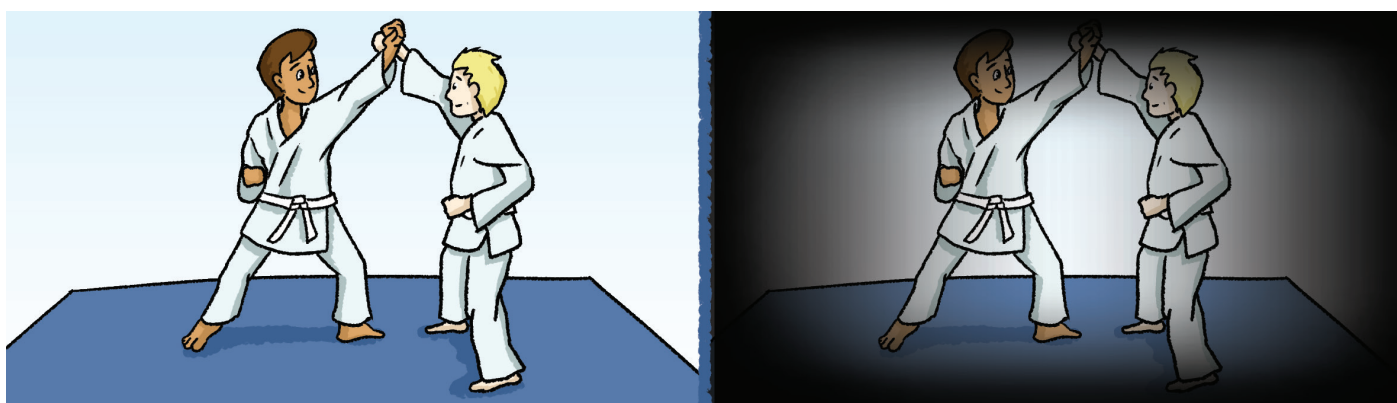
Macular degeneration

Affects a small part of the retina at the back of the eye called the macular. It causes loss of vision in the centre of the visual field, affecting vision when looking directly at something. People with this condition will usually have peripheral vision, but may struggle to recognise faces, e.g. of their fellow participants or coaches.



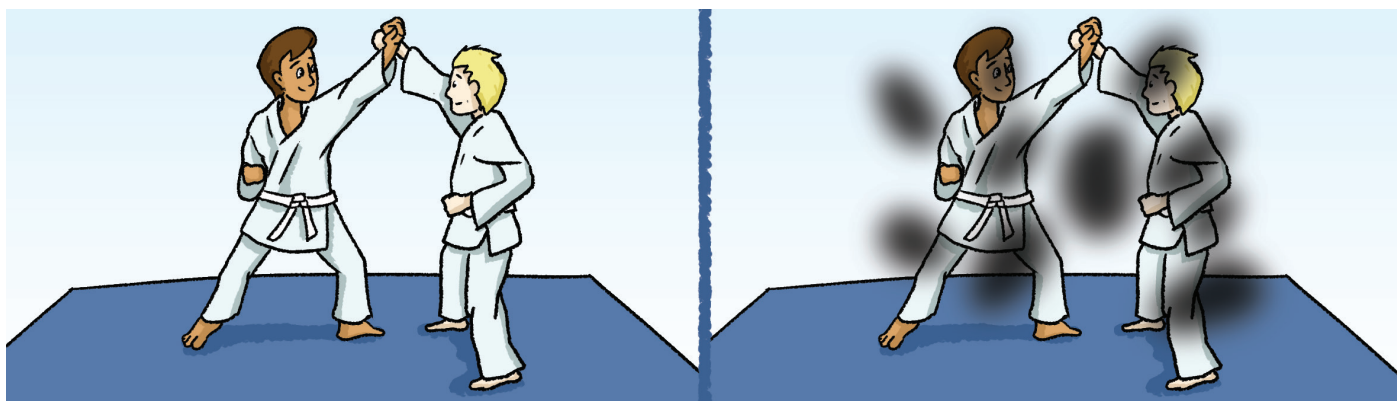
Glaucoma

Glaucoma causes a loss of peripheral vision due to damage to the optic nerve or increased eye pressure. This occurs gradually but will result in a significant reduction of peripheral vision over time. While treatment exists for glaucoma, it cannot repair existing sight loss.



Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy can affect anyone with diabetes. It causes floaters and blurred vision, resulting from damage to the retina due to high blood sugar levels.



Other conditions

Along with these four conditions, there are many other causes of sight loss. Visit the RNIB website for information on a specific eye condition.

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/eye-health/eye-conditions>

How common is it?

There are almost two million people in the UK living with sight loss. This figure includes approximately 365,000 people registered as blind or partially sighted in the UK, of which over 25,000 blind and partially sighted children (aged 0-16).

Encouraging participation

Advertising

The promotion and marketing of your sessions, training events, and activities ensures that people are aware of what your club offers, where you are located, how to get there by public transport and that you are accessible. To ensure that your advertising is accessible and welcoming to visually impaired communities, consider the following:

- Provide information in alternative formats if required (e.g. braille, plain text without images, or suitable electronic version for a screen reader). For help finding a suitable brailist, please contact British Blind Sport.
- Advertise your sessions with local and national visually impaired organisations such as British Blind Sport, RNIB, eye health hospitals or your local sight loss charity
- Many local authorities provide a sight or sensory support service. This can be an excellent method to promote your club or sessions and engage with visually impaired communities.
- Use social media to promote your services as most platforms are very accessible and popular medium for visually impaired communities. This is in keeping with the Principle 1 of the Activity Alliance tips for coaches.

Principle 1

My Channels

Use communication channels that I already trust. e.g. social media, local media.



- Consider inclusive imagery in marketing material as this can be a barrier to VI karateka registering and attending sessions

Travel

Another key barrier to participation is travel. As many VI people can be heavily reliant on public transport, it is advisable to check public transport options and promote the nearest train station or bus route in any promotional or marketing material. Some participants may rely on a sighted guide or support worker to assist with transport to and from your activity.

Principle 2 of the 10 principles from the Activity Alliance documents:

Principle 2

My Locality

Travelling to get to activities can be a significant barrier for disabled people. I would much prefer opportunities to be closer to home.



Participant information

- Provide a named contact, email and phone number on your club/Association literature
- Provide information about the nearest public transport options and provide a meet and greet service from there to the venue
- Encourage participants to contact you in advance to discuss any additional support they need
- Ask for disability information on pre-activity questionnaires or membership forms
 - This allows you to be aware of visually impaired participants prior to the session
- Contact the participant (or their parents or guardians) before a session to identify the level and type of sight loss, whether they have had any sight previously and whether they require any further support or guidance.

Staff

It is important that all volunteers and members of staff taking public enquiries are aware that your club and activities are accessible to visually impaired people. It is recommended that a document providing visually impaired guidance is readily available, which includes information on facility access, guide dog arrangements, public transport links, and the first steps to taking part.

Session venue and time

- Consider the impact of daylight on some eye conditions and organise sessions in good daylight where possible
- Partially sighted karate sessions are best played in an indoor environment. This allows for better contrast and lighting.
- Check that the training surface is suitable with high colour contrast.
- VI karate sessions are best practiced indoors as this allows for better acoustics but be careful of shared sporting halls with other activities taking place in the other half of the hall at the same time the session is running

Making karate accessible for VI karateka

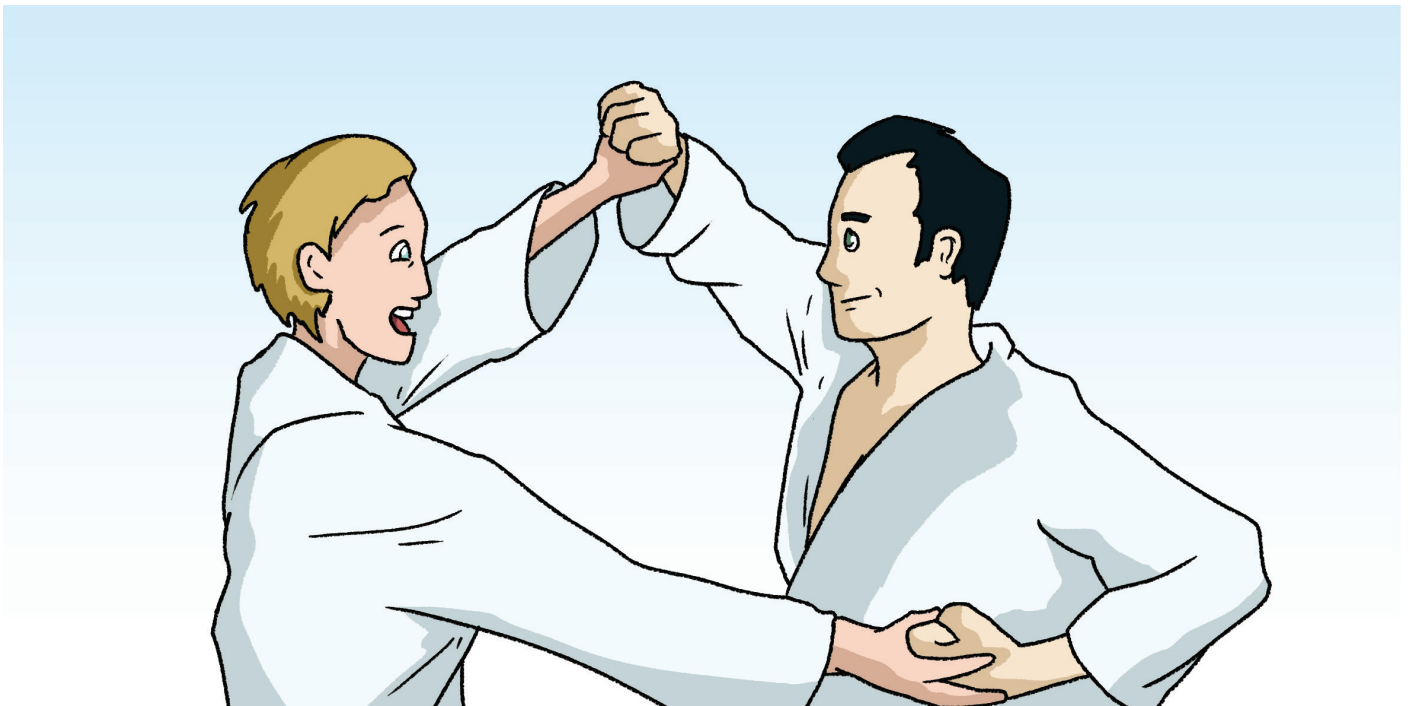
The emotional effect of having a VI cannot be quantified. Karate can develop skills and can also improve self-esteem and provide a safe environment to create enjoyable experiences. To deliver these great experiences, you need to consider several factors when delivering karate sessions for VI karateka.

General coaching advice

- Allow enough time for VI karateka to orientate themselves properly in the dojo prior to the start of the lesson
- Take into consideration that throws and sweeps will disorientate students with a VI
- Remove noise distractions as they will have an adverse effect on orientation and communication
- Each karateka will have a different level of spatial awareness, light perception and hearing so don't be afraid to ask individuals about their condition
- If working in pairs, create space around the VI student so they cannot get hurt or harm others, especially when involving weapons, throws or multiple attackers. Make his/her partner co-responsible for safety in the lesson
- New students with depth perception issues may struggle with striking a bag or focus mitt so extra support may be needed at the start until depth perception has improved
- Students may need to wear their glasses during the session, so precautions may need to be taken to avoid them falling off and breaking
- Similar precautions should be taken when dealing with contact lenses
- Some karateka with a VI will be colour blind and therefore this should be taken into consideration, especially as karate relies upon colour a lot e.g. belts, flags, mitts etc.

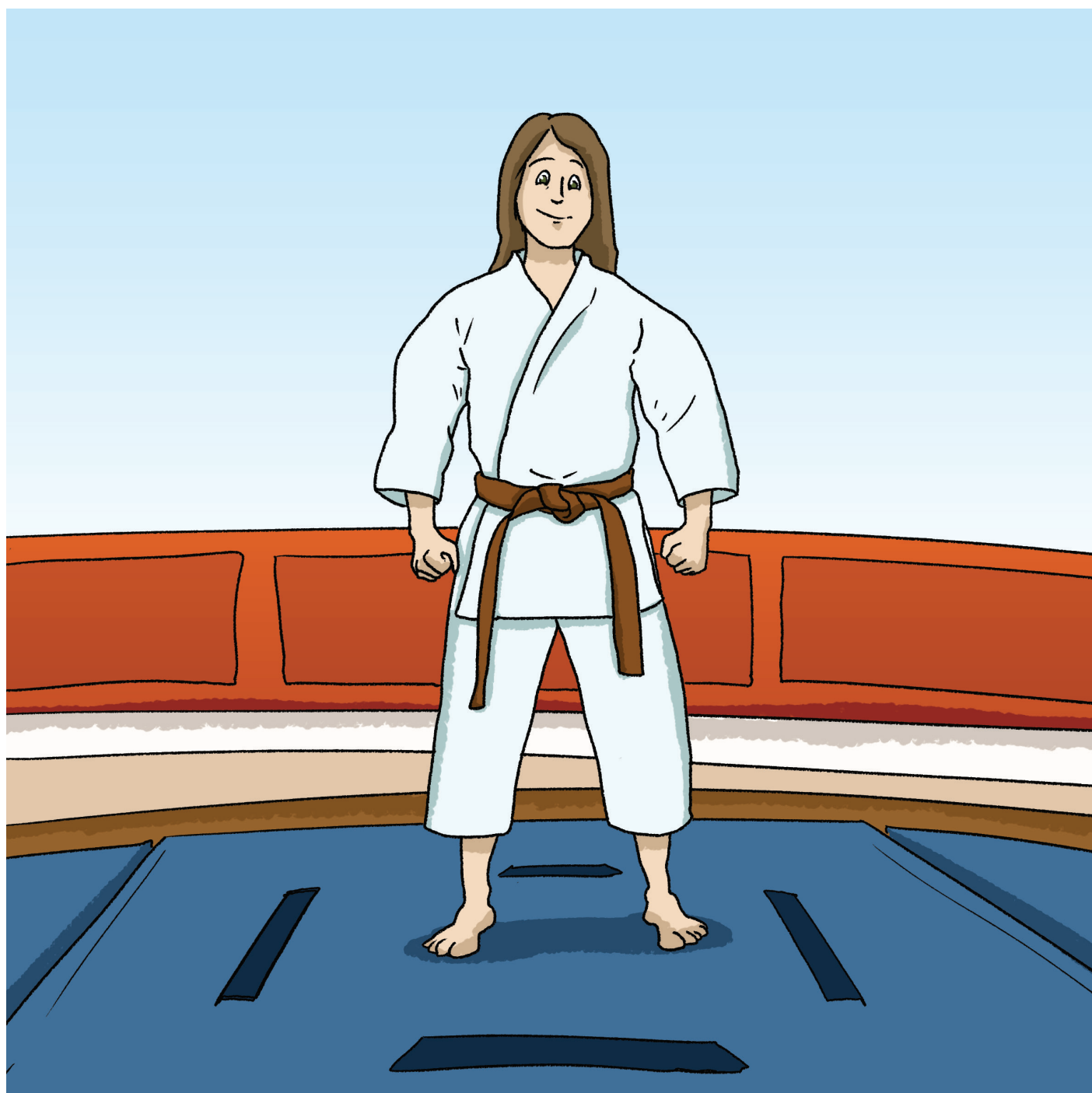
Demonstrations

- Experience sight loss yourself by listening to coaching sessions with your eyes closed. You will be able to identify whether enough information was provided and whether the techniques required were adequately described.
- Physical, manual demonstrations – utilised heavily in karate classes – may be necessary when working with VI karateka
 - It is vital that you ask the participant if they are happy for you to do this
 - Some may require additional support e.g. hands-on, guiding or assisting with skills repetition
 - When demonstrating something, sometimes use your VI student as your partner so s/he can feel the technique; and/or let her/him perform the technique on you, to check if s/he has grasped it
- When demonstrating techniques, emphasise articulation and reinforcement of movement
- Encourage learning through experimental practice and reflection
- Instructors should ensure that students are positioned close to whoever is demonstrating to ensure they have seen the demonstration



The Dojo

- Use duct tape so that students with VI can feel the floor, and on mats you can use removable pieces of Velcro with the rough side up
- Use coins taped to the floor (if possible) to make a guide-path, or again use Velcro
- Keep the floor clear and avoid low-hanging items (e.g. punch bags)
- Remove obstacles from the dojo floor
- Keep any equipment (focus pads, cones, mitts) in a well-defined area and inform the karateka of the area location



Communication styles and skills

- Verbalise all instructions as hand movements and gestures may not be seen or understood
- Give precise instructions to help VI karateka find their way
 - Avoid phrases such as 'over there', 'it's on your left hand side'
- Share notes with other coaches about VI karateka and their progress, especially if they are moving up the grades
 - This is beneficial for all karateka but particularly useful for sharing tips to coaches working with VI karateka
- The basic rules of movement do not change so therefore coaching should remain constant but slightly adapted in delivery dependent upon student
- Ensure you utilise and provide effective verbal feedback to allow individuals to understand the technique
- Consider what descriptions you use when describing an activity or technique
 - Some visually impaired karateka may not understand certain descriptions. This is due to gaps in their knowledge or having no reference for that shape or action such as specific techniques.
 - Therefore ensure that where Japanese is used in classes, the English translation and subsequent description follows
- When approaching a person or group, always say who you are by name
 - You may have to do this more than once to allow them to become familiar with the sound of your voice
- Try and verbalise body language
 - Some VI karateka may not be able to read facial expressions or make eye contact
- Address a VI karateka by name or lightly touch them on the side of the arm to indicate you are talking to them. Always ask before touching
- Don't be afraid to use everyday language such as "see" or "look."
- Clear communication is vital, so provide detailed explanations of kata, kumite and/or basic drills and dojo rules.
- Keep explanations clear and create a quiet and focussed learning environment, so do not give explanations while students are working out, especially not when 'Kiais' (shouts) are required

Positive communication

It is important to understand the needs of each individual person. Do not be afraid to ask questions to obtain information that will help you to offer the best experience.

- Remember to always introduce yourself by name to a visually impaired participant, even if you have already met before.
- Do not be afraid to ask about a new participant's level of vision.
- Find out whether the visual impairment is acquired or congenital, as this may affect their knowledge about karate and what to expect from sessions with you.
- Try to establish if there is a preferred situation or environment that promotes better vision, for example if someone has better vision in their left eye making a small change to where you stand to explain a task may make a huge difference
- Speak directly to the participant, rather than to a carer or anyone else
- Think about the acoustics of the area you are in and whether you can be clearly heard
- Remember that visually impaired participants may not be able to see visual cues, e.g. a smile, and if so, ensure that you replace these cues with verbal feedback
- It is important to use suitable phrasing when referring to people with a visual impairment and discussing visual impairments in general
 - Using the wrong language can create a barrier, whereas using appropriate terminology will help you build lasting relationships with your participants and grow your participation programmes

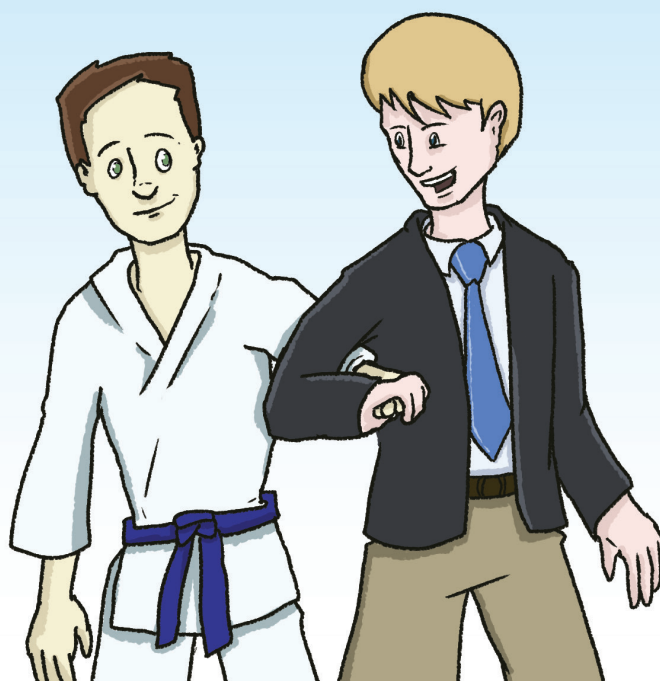
Phrases to use	Phrases to avoid
Person with a visual impairment	The blind
Person with sight loss	The handicapped
Visually impaired person	The disabled
Has an impairment	Suffers from

Guiding VI karateka

Unfamiliar surroundings can provide challenges for people with a visual impairment. They may require assistance in addition to the karate activity, such as before the session or at a club's social event.

Follow these tips when guiding a visually impaired person.

- Identify yourself and ask the VI karateka if they would like some help. Do not just presume that they need your assistance
- Always highlight potential dangers such as doorways or slippery areas
 - Do at the start of the session and throughout (if any changes) e.g. sweat on the floor
- Offer your elbow or shoulder for them to take hold. Ask which side they prefer to be guided on
- If guiding a child, they may want to hold your hand instead of your arm
- Always ask which technique they would prefer
- Make sure you are always one step in front of the person that you are guiding
- Ask if they are happy with the pace
- Communicate at all times, describing what is around them and explain any changes in ground surface
- Make sure the individual is aware of staircases as you approach them
- When you guide a person to a seat, place their hand on the back of the chair. They will be able to sit down by themselves
- As you walk through doorways, make sure the visually impaired person is behind you. Be careful and make sure you don't get hit by the door
- Explain any loud noises if they occur
- Keep your guiding arm still and relaxed; don't start waving it about
- Give the visually impaired person adequate room around obstacles.



Guide Dogs

Some visually impaired participants may have guide dogs. Identify the best location at the venue where the guide dog can rest, whilst the owner is participating. The best location is usually the reception or offices, where the dog can relax and be supervised. It is important to provide water for the dog to drink. Guide Dogs UK can provide advice about how to ensure a guide dog is comfortable at your venue.



Competitions

The WKF caters for karateka with a VI. Competitors can compete in the male and female K10 category.

For further information on eligibility please refer to the below document:

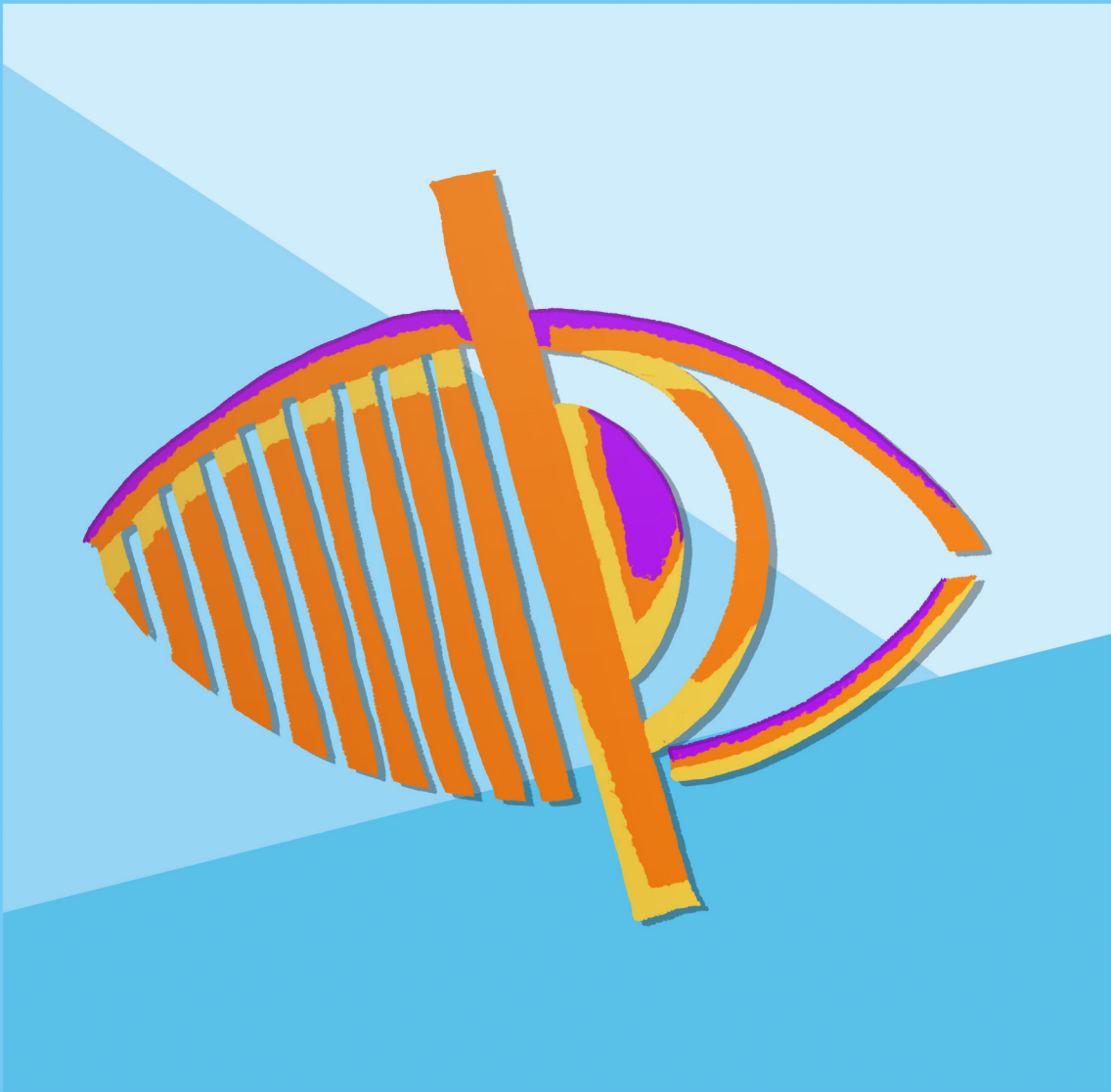
https://www.wkf.net/pdf/ParaKarate_Classification_Rules.pdf

References

- A Guide To Visually Impaired Friendly Sport by British Blind Sport



A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE THROUGH SPORT



WARMAN
illustrations.

Illustrations and Layout by Warman Illustrations