

Factsheet: Orientation & Mobility and Low Vision

Orientation & Mobility (O&M)

Orientation & Mobility refers to the skills required to enable a person with low vision or blindness to travel safely and purposefully through their environment.

Orientation means knowing your position in space, in relation to other objects, people and places.

- Where am I now?
- Where am I going?
- How am I going to get there?

Mobility is the physical act of moving through the environment safely and efficiently. This might be through the use of a mobility aid, such as a long cane, or learning to use functional vision effectively.

Low vision refers to a vision impairment that can't be corrected by surgery, contact lenses, or glasses. Causes of low vision in Australia include:

- Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- Cataract
- Glaucoma
- Diabetic retinopathy
- Retinal diseases including retinitis pigmentosa
- Cortical/cerebral vision impairment

Commonwealth of Australian (2005). *Eye Health in Australia*.

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/D1A5409787D800F2CA257C73007F12F3/%24File/eyehlth.pdf>

What Does an Orientation & Mobility Assessment Involve?

O&M Specialists will functional assessments looking at how you currently move through your home and community. This will include assessing:

- Can you safely see and avoid obstacles?
- How far away can you see movement, colour, and size of objects?
- Are you primarily using vision, hearing, touch or smell to identify landmarks?
- Are you using your functional vision safely and efficiently?
- Can you see and safely negotiate steps and kerbs?
- Can you safely navigate road crossings?
- Do you have difficulties traveling at night or in poor lighting conditions?

What Does Orientation & Mobility Training Involve?

O&M training is individual. It depends on the amount and type of functional vision you have, where you are travelling, and what your goals for independent travel are.

Some examples of O&M interventions include:

- Learning to use functional vision safely and efficiently in a range of environments.
- Developing safe road crossing skills and strategies.
- Becoming familiar with public transport.
- Using a low vision aid, such as a monocular, to read street signs or identify bus numbers.
- Learning to use GPS and smart-phone apps whilst travelling.
- Navigating the local shopping centre, supermarket, or city streets.
- Use of a mobility aid, such as a long cane, if appropriate.

Contact

To locate an O&M Specialist in Australia, you can search on the website of the Orientation & Mobility Association of Australasia (OMAA): <https://www.omaaustralasia.com>

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