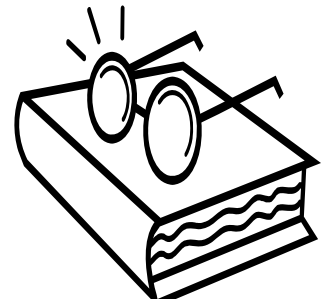


TIPS FOR LOW VISION

2/2005

The INFO SERIES has been developed to provide you with general information. The descriptions do not describe the full extent of information available. Please contact one of our Independent Living Specialists for more information.

Vision problems may make it difficult for people to pick out details in their environment. Things may look foggy. People may be able to observe only large items, or to distinguish only shadow and light. Glare from highly polished floors and highly reflective wall coverings may be blinding, as may bright light from direct lighting or from windows. People may not be able to see adequately at low levels of lighting. Further, their eyes may not respond quickly to abrupt changes in levels of lighting. For example, they may be unable to see well when entering a dark area from a well-lighted one. Depth perception too, may change. Here are some suggested modifications.



NON-TECH IDEAS

- **Clear Pathways.** Keep cabinet and closet doors fully open or fully closed. Move furniture out of the traffic areas and remove tripping hazards, e.g. area rugs.
- **Use tape to distinguish items or space.** Use removable highlighting tape or use various lengths of masking tape to identify items of choice.
- **Medication Bottles** - - Ask the Pharmacist to fill medications in differing size bottles for easier identification.
- **Medication Identification** - - To remember medication and to help identify, apply rubber bands (can use different colors or sizes) to pill bottles and remove 1 each time a medication has been taken.
- **Liquid monitor** - - Placing a fishing bobber or an ice cube in your glass helps identify liquid levels.
- **Checkbooks** - - Ask your bank for large print checkbooks.
- **Writing guide** - - Use heavyweight paper or cardboard, with a rectangular space cut out, to provide space to sign your name or write information. Use a contrasting color for visual difference.
- **Lighting.** Make use of natural light, keep blinds open. Put your favorite reading chair by the window. Experiment with Chromalux or Tri-phosphor compact

fluorescent bulbs. They are especially useful for macular degeneration and/or diabetic retinopathy.

- **Lighting Change** - - It may take awhile for the eyes to adjust to changes in lighting. The ability to recover from a sudden exposure to a bright light or glare decreases. When moving from a dark to bright lighted environment or the reverse, the person should pause a second to allow the eyes to accommodate to the change in light. Use night lights to provide assistance.
- **Money** - - To identify paper money, use a folding technique. For example, use a wallet with multiple compartments. \$1.00 bills can be kept in one compartment and fold \$5.00 in ½, \$10.00 in half lengthwise, \$20.00 folded lengthwise and in ½.
- **Raised and Bright Color Surface** - - Bright colors and raised texture can be used to add identification marks to any surface from canned goods to appliances. Nail polish or puff paint (fabric store) can be used, or special markers can be purchased.
- Use **directory assistance**. Most telephone companies offer this service free to visually impaired persons.
- For **matching clothes**, keep matched outfits on the same hanger and pin matching socks together.

LOW TECHNOLOGY

- **Provide more lighting. Introduce task lighting** (heightened or special illumination of selected spaces) in the kitchen, in reading areas, in the bathroom, and on the stairs. Among the possibilities are stick-on or screw-on fluorescent lighting under kitchen cabinets and along stairwells and hallways; plug-in wall sconces or lamps; and plug-in ceiling swag lights. This will help assist those with low vision.
- Use **rope lights** on stairs to define each stair and provide more illuminations.
- **Reduce glare** by putting coating on windows. Use low-gloss finishes on floors, textured wallpaper or matte paint on walls.
- **Add rheostats**. These devices adjust the intensity of lighting (for more or less brightness, as needed).
- **Install light switches that glow in the dark** so they are easy to locate.
- **Magnifier** - - Carry a folding pocket or purse magnifier.
- **Voice Activated Lamps** responds to your voice to turn lights on and off
- **The Clapper** is an inexpensive device (as seen on TV) that turns items on and off.
- **Enhance color perception**. For example, bright, contrasting colors might be used to differentiate walls, floors, and counters. Similarly, colors or contrasting patterns might be used to distinguish the risers on stairs (the vertical parts) from the treads (the horizontal parts).



- **Change floor surfaces.** Different floor surfaces can offer tactile cues for navigation. For example, use tile in the entrance foyer, carpeting in the living room, hardwood in the hall, vinyl in the kitchen, and so forth.
- **Add sticky-backed felt** applied to the smooth surface of a microwave oven's pressure pad: one to each of several frequently used functions, such as Reheat, 1 minute, Start, and Clear.
- **Self-threading needles** can be used for sewing and craftwork.
- **Talking items** such as clocks, caller ID, Key chains, calculator and thermometers are available.
- **Large print items** are available and include address books, playing cards, calendars, cookbook. Information that can be typed on a computer can be adjusted to large print.
- **Writing guides** are available to help a person sign their name on forms, write letters and checks, and to address envelopes.
- **Bold pens and bold-line paper** are available for purchase to make writing easier.

HIGH TECHNOLOGY _____

- **A skylight can illuminate even the darkest room.** Less costly than a skylight but giving the effect of one is a new technology, the light tube, a packaged lighting device that can be installed through a roof.
- **Video Magnifier or CCTV** - - Use this for hobbies, crafts, schoolwork, and reading. On-the-job tasks can use a stand-alone or computer-linked device.
- **Magnifiers with and without illumination** - - There are many to choose from including hand-held, on stands, full-page magnifiers, dome magnifiers, and different strengths of magnification.
- **Video Telescopes** are useful for identifying street signs, building signs, pedestrian signals.
- **Voice activated in-line phone dialer** responds to your voice and holds 60 phone numbers.
- **Talking Devices** - - Talking watches, alarm clocks, calendars, compass, tire gauge, indoor/outdoor thermometer, and blood glucose meters are examples.
- Large or raised print **telephone** dials, large print and talking telephones are available.



TECHNOLOGY CLOSET _____

Society's Assets operates a "technology closet" that currently has about 500 items. Equipment can be tried out before making a purchase. Over the years assistive

technology has played an increasingly critical role in assisting individuals to live independently in their homes. Contact an Independent Living Coordinator at Society's Assets to see if we have the item you are looking for.



RESOURCES

- **Stores** - - Many of the items recommended are available at stores in the area.
- **Catalogues** - - Check with Society's Assets. Catalogues on assistive technology are available in the resource library.
- **Used equipment** may be available. Keep in mind that some equipment is very specialized to an individual's needs. Contact the Independent Living Coordinator for a list of resources. There are some local organizations that offer equipment recycling, as well as, state organizations and Internet sites. For mobility equipment there is a Wisconsin Wheelchair Recycling project.
- **Info Sheets** - - Society's Assets has Info Sheets that list resources of where to order items. There are Info Sheets for telephones, clothing, driving, hard of hearing equipment, visual aid equipment, and physical limitations.
- Check **web sites**. If you don't have a computer, the libraries have computers you can use.

FUNDING



There are many funding sources. Each source has its own regulations, limits and eligibility requirements, and each situation is different. Don't overlook the possibilities of combining funding sources to reach your goal. Here are some options to check out.

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|---|----------------------------|
| ▪ Medicaid | ▪ Workers Compensation |
| ▪ Medicaid Waivers | ▪ Family Support Program |
| ▪ Medicare | ▪ Disability Organizations |
| ▪ Private Insurance | ▪ Private Grants |
| ▪ Veteran's Benefits | ▪ WisLoan |
| ▪ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation | ▪ County Funded Programs |

The listings on this Info Sheet should in no way be construed to constitute an endorsement of an agency or organization or its service, nor should exclusion be construed to constitute disapproval. The information that appears in this publication was obtained from the agencies/organizations listed above.



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 (262) 657-3999 V/TTY
 (800) 317-3999 V/TTY

Elkhorn Office
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 (262) 723-8181 V/TTY
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