



TIPS **for Successfully
Living with
Vision Loss**



**Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Division of Public Health
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This booklet offers suggestions to help simplify the activities you perform in your daily life. Utilizing color contrast, large print, labeling, organization, and helpful devices can assist with these activities. These techniques may not work for everybody and should not be considered the only correct way to aid with daily living.

To learn more about living with vision loss and the adaptive equipment or techniques mentioned in this booklet, contact:

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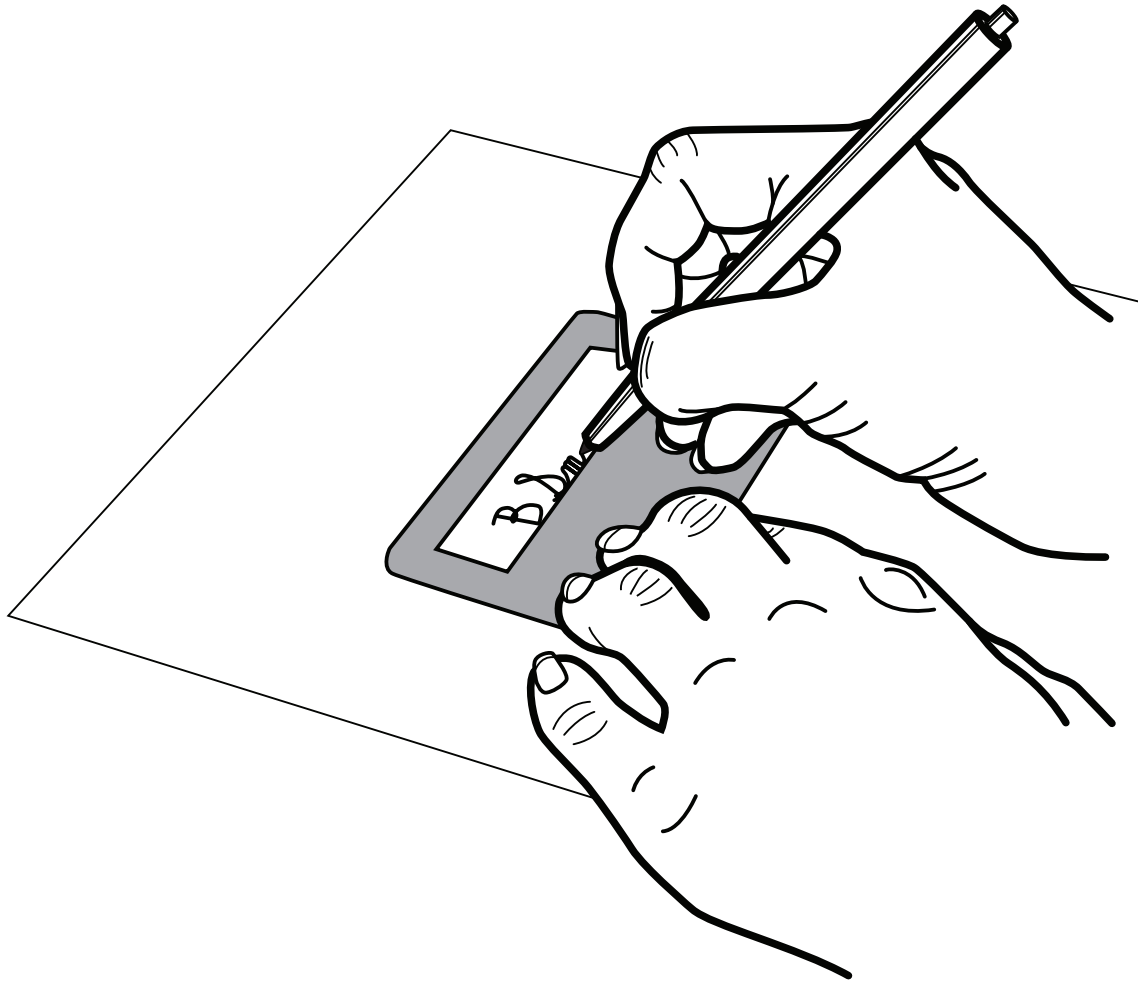
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Communication

Reading and Writing

For people with vision loss, writing can be made easier with a variety of useful tools:

- Bold-lined paper has thick, dark lines that are easier to see and farther apart than traditionally ruled paper.
- Bold pens can be used with or without bold lined paper. Using them also helps to make your writing easier to see.
- Writing guides are helpful for tasks where bold-lined paper is not useful or not available, including:
 - Writing checks.
 - Addressing envelopes.
 - Signing forms.
- Large print address books, planners, calendars, and checks are available for people who have a hard time seeing standard print.



- Magnifiers and extra lights can help by making print bigger and increasing contrast. They come in many styles and can be held in your hand, placed on a table, or set on the floor. Many magnifiers also have built-in lights.
- To prevent shadows on the paper, place lamps on the opposite side of the hand you use to write.

Recording Devices

Instead of writing, you may find that using a portable digital recorder is useful for making lists or reminders for yourself. There are also smart phone applications that serve the same function as a digital recorder.

Phones

If you have trouble using the phone, the following tips may help:

- Keep track of phone numbers by writing each contact and phone number on an index card in large, bold print. Keep them organized alphabetically to easily find the ones you need.
- Use a telephone with braille, extra large buttons, or a talking keypad.
- Turn on the accessibility features on your cell phone. Touch-screen smart phones have features, such as screen magnification, screen reading software, and accessible typing, that help you better use your phone.

Computers

Like cell phones, computers have built-in accessibility features that can make seeing the screen much easier for people with vision loss. Other possible adaptations for using the computer include:

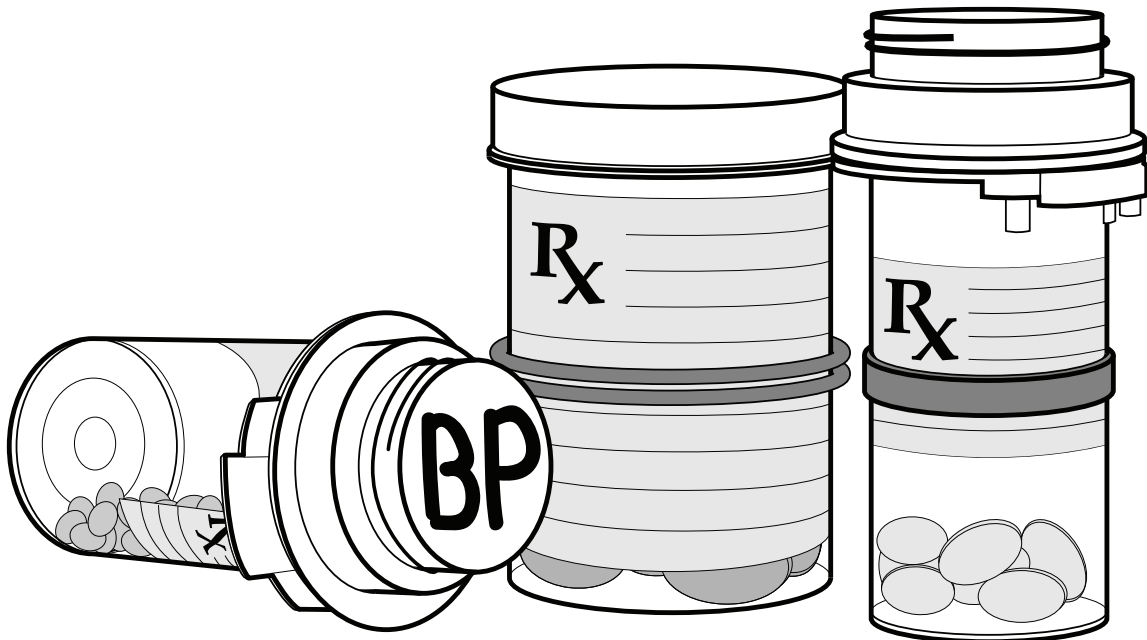
- Using a large print or braille keyboard, or getting stickers to place on your existing keyboard.
- Learning keyboard shortcut commands so you can rely less on the mouse pointer.
- Using additional accessibility software, like a screen reading program or speech-to-text software.
- Using a larger monitor.

Household Management

Labeling

There are several methods of differentiating between items with similar labels (for example, prescription bottles or shampoo and conditioner):

- Place different colors of tape around each container.
- Wrap rubber bands around certain items and leave others untouched.



- Mark bottle caps in large print with the first letters of the contents. For example, write “BP” on the top of the bottle for your blood pressure medication.
- Use a talking labeler.
- Save and reuse caps that you’ve marked to avoid having to mark them again.

Cleaning

The following tips can make household cleaning quicker and easier:

- Store cleaning supplies in a bucket and carry it with you when cleaning, or wear an apron with large pockets for carrying cleaning supplies. Keeping everything with you will reduce the hassle of having to walk back and forth to the cabinet for supplies.
- Apply cleaning sprays directly onto your cleaning cloth instead of the surface you’re cleaning. This way, you won’t accidentally leave any behind if you miss a spot.

- Clean flat surfaces (for example, tables, windows, and counters) in a grid pattern. Wipe up and down, then left and right, to ensure you cover the entire area.
- Wear soft cotton gloves or socks over your hands to dust instead of using a cloth.

Organization

Keeping your home and work areas organized will eliminate many of the frustrations you may experience with vision loss. Follow these steps to organize your belongings:

- Eliminate clutter by getting rid of items you don't use, fixing or throwing away items that are broken, and storing items you don't use often.
- Store similar items together; it will be much easier to find exactly what you need.
- Use containers like boxes, bags, or baskets to keep items together and in place.
- Use small boxes within drawers as dividers to organize items.

- Label storage areas so items are put back in the same place.
- Label items and storage containers.
- Create a maintenance plan. Determine how often you are going to check and reorganize your drawers and cupboards.

Home Repairs

Utilize these tips to safely make minor home repairs:

- Determine the tools you'll need and organize them before you begin.
- Use a piece of bright contrasting tape to mark locations where you need to place nails or screws.
- Hold nails that you are going to hammer with needle nose pliers. This will provide color contrast and protect your fingers.

Electrical Outlets and Light Switches

Locating wall outlets and light switches is often difficult, especially when they blend in with the color of your walls. To help, follow these tips:

- Put bright tape around outlets and light switches.
- Replace cover plates with ones that contrast in color with the wall.
- Install LED lighted switch cover plates.

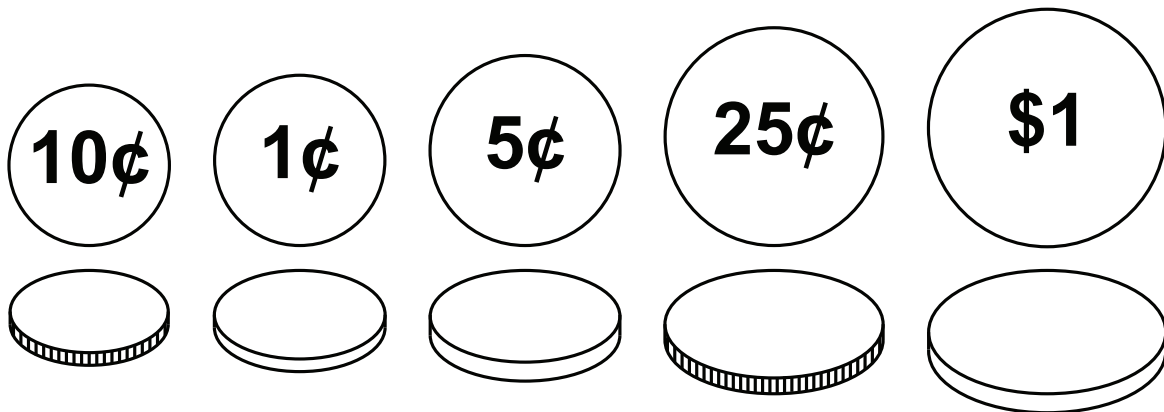
Plug electronics into wall outlets safely by placing two fingers of one hand around the cover plate while guiding the plug into the outlet with your other hand.

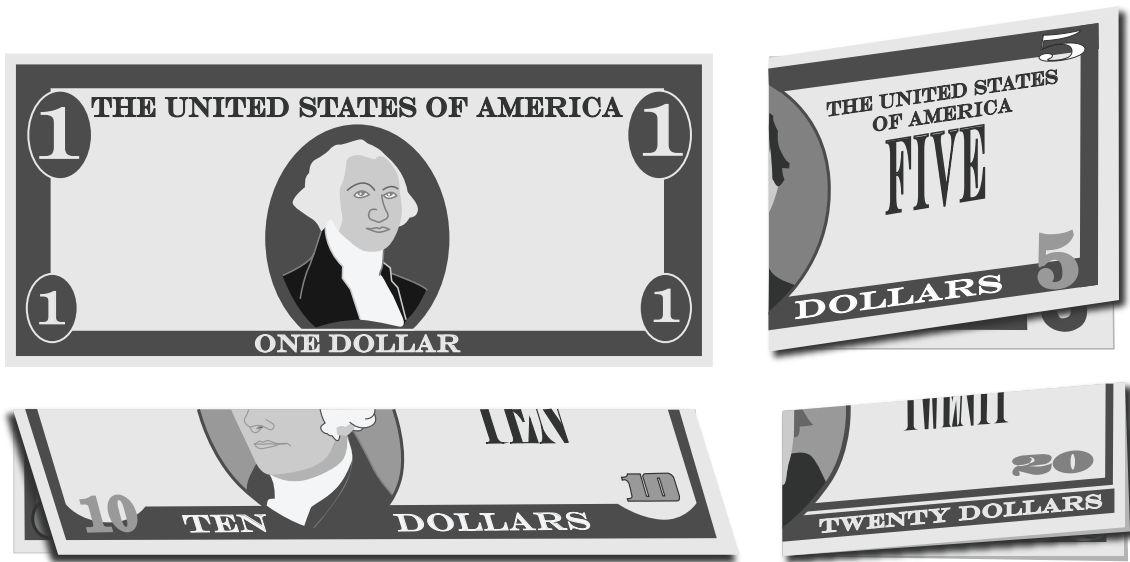
Personal Management

Money

To identify coins, remember the following:

- The edges of quarters and dimes have ridges. Nickels and pennies have smooth edges.
- Quarters are larger than dimes, and nickels are larger than pennies.
- The dollar coin is larger than a quarter and has smooth edges.





Use these folding techniques to differentiate between paper bills:

- Keep one dollar bills flat and fully extended.
- Fold five dollar bills in half with the short sides together.
- Fold 10 dollar bills in half with the long sides together.
- Fold 20 dollar bills in half twice, once the long way and once the short way.

To keep your money organized, follow these tips:

- Use specified pockets in your wallet or purse for designated denominations of coins or bills.
- Keep quarters separate from other coins, as they are generally used most often.
- Tell cashiers the denomination of the money you give them, and ask them to identify the change they return to you.

Brushing Your Teeth

When brushing your teeth, if you find it difficult to get the toothpaste onto your toothbrush, try one of the following helpful methods:

- Put toothpaste on your finger and then onto the toothbrush.
- Use toothpaste from a pump dispenser.
- Squeeze toothpaste directly into your mouth. However, this may introduce bacteria into the tube.
- Squeeze toothpaste into a wide-mouth jar and dip your toothbrush in as needed.

Personal Grooming

To tell the difference between items in similarly shaped containers—shampoo and conditioner or medication bottles, for example—use techniques discussed in the labeling section of this guide (page 8).

Certain grooming tasks can be complicated by vision loss. Keep the following tips in mind to make your grooming routine easier to accomplish:

- Use a magnified mirror for shaving or applying makeup. Many of these mirrors have built-in lighting.
- Cool nail polish and cosmetics in the refrigerator to make it easier to feel where you have applied them.
- Use tactile landmarks on your face to determine where to apply makeup or begin shaving. This will ensure that it is even on both sides.

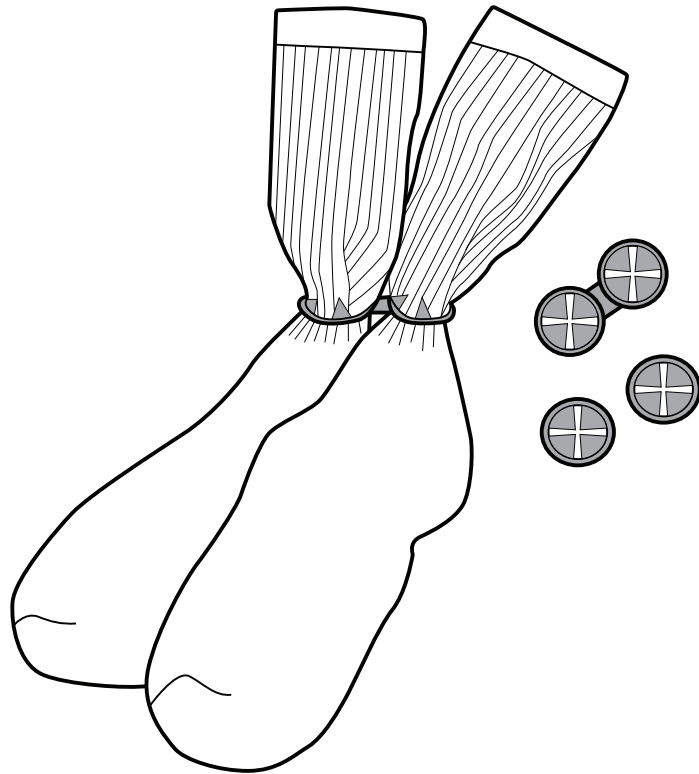
Clothing

Identify and keep track of your clothing with the following tips:

- Differentiate between pieces of clothing by using tactile cues, such as:
 - Fabric texture.
 - Seam placement.
 - Zippers.
 - Button texture and shape.
- Clip small safety pins to the tags or inside hems of items that might be difficult to differentiate from similar items.
- Place tactile markers on the back of only your right shoes in order to tell the difference between right and left.
- Tie a knot in the shoestrings of one pair of tennis shoes to differentiate them from a similar pair that does not have knots.
- Use a talking labeler with washable labels to record clothing descriptions.

Aside from telling different pieces apart, you can also simplify your dressing routine by using the following tips to organize your clothing and accessories:

- Group clothing in your drawers or closets together based on style, type, and color (for example, blue blouses, white t-shirts, or black slacks).
- Use small boxes or other separators inside dresser drawers.
- Use a tackle, artist, or craft box with dividers to sort jewelry.
- Pin socks together or use sock sorters to keep from losing matching socks in the laundry.
- Return items to the same place every time after you wash them.



Food Preparation and Eating

Food Preparation

Follow these suggestions to make food prep easier:

- Organize your ingredients and utensils on a tray prior to beginning your food prep.
- Use a large kitchen timer that is easy to see or set a timer on your smart phone or voice-activated virtual assistant (such as Google Home or Amazon Echo).
- Use a cutting board that contrasts with the color of your food.
- Avoid over-seasoning your food by pouring spices into the palm of your hand first and then sprinkling a pinch at a time.

Cooking Safety

Being unable to see an oven rack or cutting surface can be dangerous, but there are several ways to adapt your cooking techniques to remain safe:

- Avoid burns from reaching into a hot oven by using an oven rack grabber or long oven mitts.
- Grill or fry foods with a small indoor grill or air fryer. This is much safer than pan-frying on the stove.
- Use a slow cooker instead of your stove top or oven.
- Cut food and packaging with a pair of scissors instead of a knife.



Using Appliances

Utilize the following tips to safely and efficiently use your kitchen appliances:

- Put brightly colored tape on the dials so they don't blend in with the background.

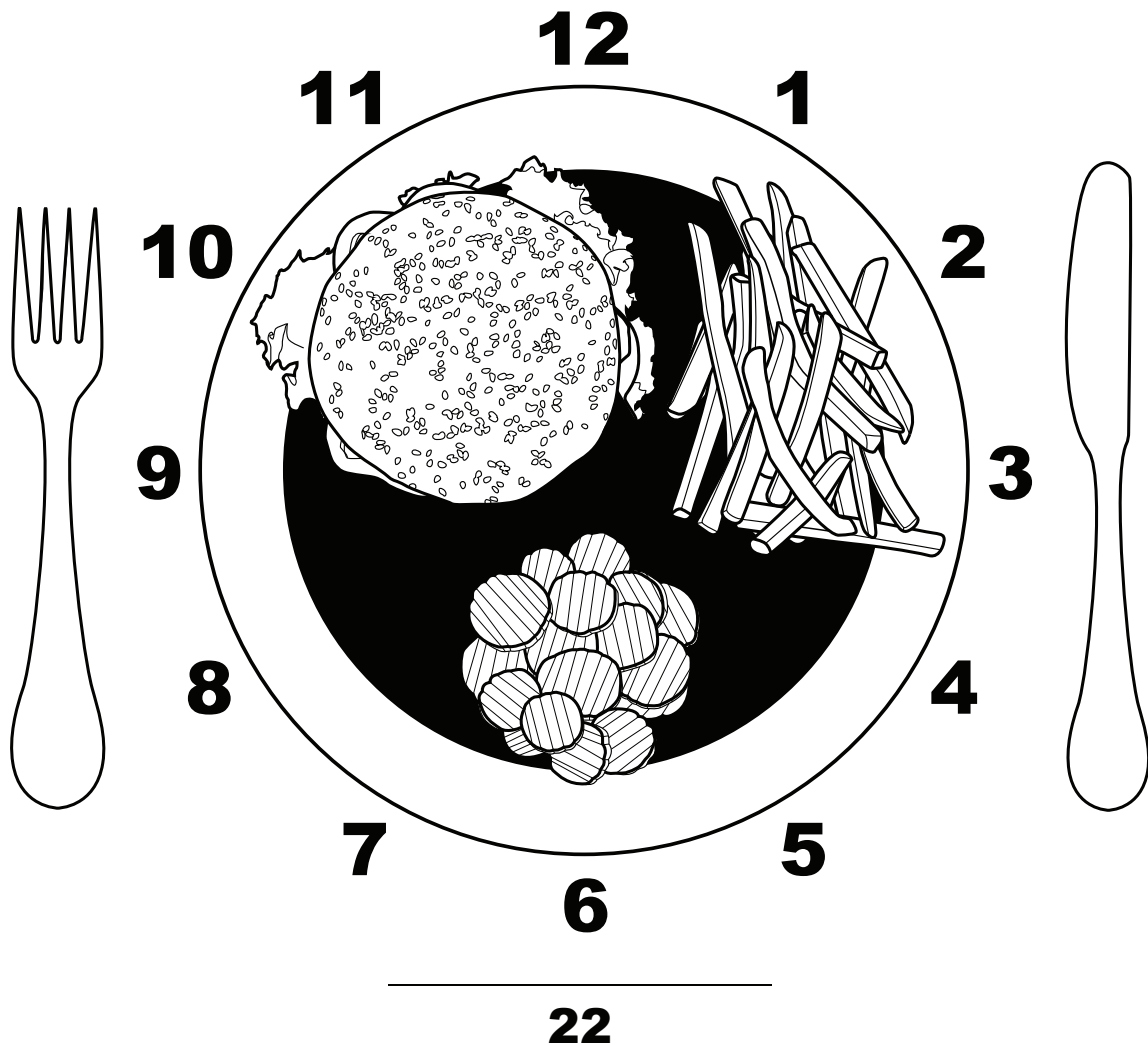
- Identify frequently used settings. Use raised dots, braille, or bright tape to mark them.
- Check your microwave for a one-minute or 30-second button. Place a tactile marker on it for easy identification.
- Increase lighting around your appliances or keep a flashlight nearby to increase lighting when needed.
- Use hand-held magnifiers to read small print around dials or on buttons.

Eating and Drinking

Minimize the possibility of messes or accidents when eating and drinking by keeping these tips in mind:

- Use solid color tablecloths to avoid visually confusing patterns.
- Reach for items on the table with your fingers downward, lightly touching the table to avoid knocking items over.
- Pour liquids into and serve food on dishware that contrasts in color to your food and drink.

- Insert the tip of your index finger into your glass when pouring beverages to determine when the glass is full. For hot beverages, use a liquid level indicator that buzzes or beeps when liquid is near the top of the cup.
- Visualize the face of a clock to indicate the location of food on a plate—for example, carrots at 6:00, hamburger at 11:00, and fries at 2:00.



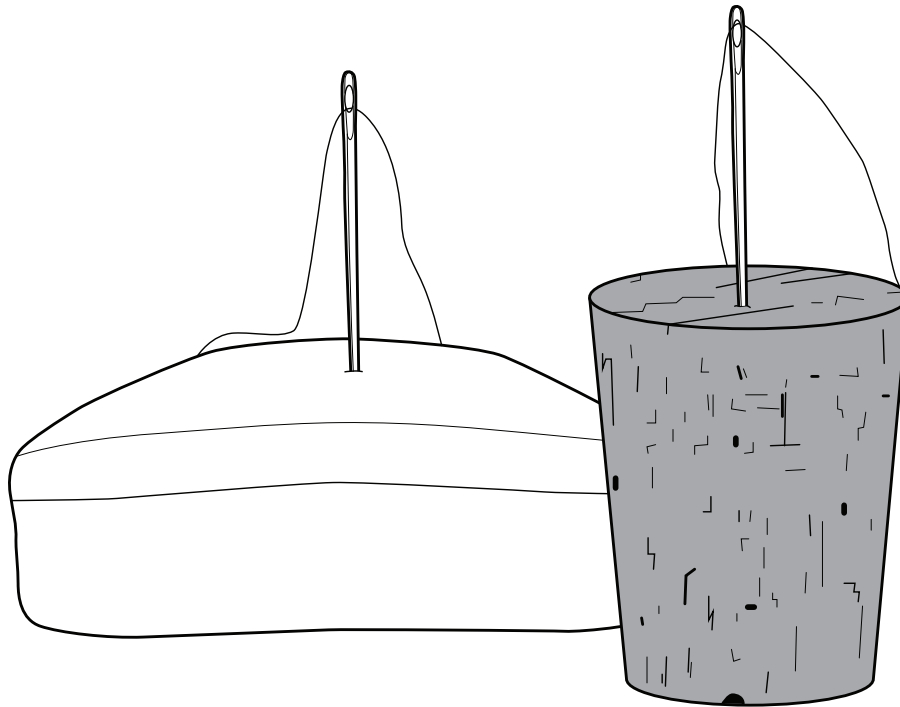


Miscellaneous Activities and Hobbies

Having vision loss does not mean you have to give up your favorite leisure activities or hobbies. There are countless ways to adapt your hobbies to work with vision loss. For example:

- Purchase large print or braille playing cards and bingo cards.

- Ask your movie theater if they have audio description service—headphones that play the sounds of the movie along with a narrator that describes the scenes and characters.
- Listen to sporting events on the radio (the radio announcers give a more detailed description of the game).
- Use a tactile ruler or tape measure for arts and crafts.
- Anchor sewing needles in a cork or bar of soap to thread them.



Lighting and Personal Safety

Lighting

For a person with vision loss, ample lighting is necessary for successfully completing any task. When lighting your home and work areas, remember:

- Keep all rooms evenly lit so that your eyes do not have to adjust to lighting changes when walking from one room to another.
- Replace incandescent lightbulbs with compact fluorescent or LED bulbs. They are more energy efficient and produce a brighter light.
- Have task lamps that you can move closer or farther away from your work, depending on your lighting needs.
- Prevent shadows when writing by placing your task lamp on the opposite side of the hand that you use to write, so that the paper is between your hand and the lamp.

Eye Protection

Whether you have some vision or no vision at all, always make sure to protect your eyes from the damaging effects of the sun. Often, eye protection also helps to reduce glare, which can help you use your remaining vision as effectively as possible.

When considering eye protection, remember the following:

- Choose sunglasses with both UV-A and UV-B protection.
- Have more than one pair of sunglasses available. Your needs may change depending on the lighting in your environment.
- Reduce glare both indoors and outdoors by wearing colored glare-shield glasses or glasses with polarized lenses.
- Shield your eyes from overhead glare by wearing a ball cap or visor with a brim.

Reducing Your Risk of Falls

People with vision loss have an increased risk of falling. Take these steps to reduce your risk of a fall:

- Increase lighting in areas like hallways, stairways, and closets, so you can see better to navigate your home safely.
- Turn on lights when walking around at night, or use night lights.
- Clear walkways throughout your house. Pick up clutter and remove tripping hazards like rugs and cords.