

EQUIPMENT GUIDE

We have compiled this guide to give you an overview of some of the aids and equipment that you might find helpful if you have a

Visual impairment. You may be surprised at the range available from simple gadgets that make life easier in the kitchen to the latest in specialist computer technology.

This guide is intended only to give an indication of what's available.

It is not a complete catalogue, so if you are interested in a particular item, or would like more information, please give us a call.

Some of the items in this guide are stocked at Helping hands for the blind's support office – and in this case we can post them to you (no charge for postage). Others can be ordered for you.

You may find it helpful to discuss your needs with someone at helping hands for the blind support office on: 01256 463966. If you are looking for something that isn't included here, please let

Us know as we may be able to help you source it elsewhere.

Likewise, if you are having difficulties with a particular activity and don't know if there is anything that might help, please do get in touch

We hope you find this guide helpful. It is also available as an audio file download on our website.

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1. A few favourites

The items on this page all appear elsewhere in the Guide too, but we've grouped them together here as they are probably the most popular things we sell.

Lamps.

Good lighting can make so much difference! The lamps we sell at Helping hands for the blind have been specifically developed for people with sight problems.

Clocks and watches.

It can be infuriating not to know what time it is. If you have enough sight, a clock or watch with a larger-than usual face may do the trick. Otherwise, try a talking watch or clock– the time at the touch of a button.

Bump-ones.

Brilliant! They are tactile 'buttons' that stick onto any smooth surface - so you can use your fingers rather than your eyes to find the right button on your remote control, identify the most useful programme on your washing machine, set the oven to the right temperature setting, or find buttons on your CD player.

Liquid level indicators.

If you're a tea addict, this is the gadget for you. It makes a noise and vibrates when the liquid in your mug reaches a certain level. No more worries about spilling boiling water everywhere.

Diaries and calendars.

Many people who can't see 'normal' print can use one of these. The type is large and black, and you can write on them in heavy black felt tip (we sell those too) – much easier to see than a ballpoint.

Clocks & Watches

For people with enough sight, we have clocks and watches with easy-to-see faces – for example, with extra large numbers, Or try a talking watch or clock – just press a button and listen to the time. Some talking clocks and watches will also give you the date and some are radio controlled – so they will always keep time, and you don't need to worry when the clocks change. Some are available with alarms or tactile markings. And we also have talking pocket and pendant watches.

Lamps

Good lighting is incredibly important in enabling you to use whatever vision you have. We have a range of desk, portable, floor and hand-held lamps. Some come with magnifiers. A daylight bulb gives the best quality of light for most people with a visual impairment, and does not get hot – so you can angle the lamp to maximise the amount of light on the object you want to see - while lamps fitted with LEDs give out extremely high levels of light.

Telephones

Big-button telephones make dialling much easier. And although we don't supply mobile phones, we can give you guidance about what works best for people with a visual impairment. We have a few examples we can show you; some are extremely simple to use, with just a few buttons you can pre-set with your favourite numbers

Magnifiers

Some magnifiers are simple hand-held devices, others are electronic. With the traditional hand held type, we recommend that you get one from your local sensory services team, to ensure that it is correct for your vision. However, do ask us if you want a replacement – or some people like to keep a magnifier in every room! They come with a range of magnifying power and some have an in-built light.

With electronic magnifiers, you can usually zoom in and out, change the image to suit your vision (eg you may prefer white text on a black background) and adjust the level of magnification. They range from portable devices, to hand-held units you can plug into a computer or television screen (best for short pieces of text such as letters or recipes), to large stand-alone magnifiers that display the image on their own screen.

Leisure time

If you're fond of games, try playing cards with enlarged print and images, or over-size cards (even larger). Large dice come with raised tactile dots and Braille characters. There are tactile dominoes too, as well as large Scrabble and jigsaws.

For those keen on crafts, a knitting needle size gauge or a needle threader could be very useful, as could tactile rulers and tape measures.

Computing

Many people can carry on using their computers with some simple adjustments to things like font and icon sizes, screen resolution and background colours. Helping hands for the blind has some trained volunteers who can visit you at home to effect these changes.

If you need specialist software – for example, a screen reader we recommend that you talk to us before making a decision.

There are many products, some are very expensive, and it's important to choose the right one.

Arrange a demo of the most common screen reader software with us.

Peripherals like keyboard overlays, with large letters and numbers (available in various colours eg white on black, black on yellow) can be very helpful, as can large-key keyboards (also in various colour combinations).

Large Print

Our diaries, calendars, telephone and address books are very helpful if you can read large print. And if you're keen on sudoku, word searches, puzzles or crosswords, we also have those in large print too.

Getting out and about

You need to have been trained to use a symbol or guide cane, but we can provide a replacement if yours has been lost or damaged.

Please bear in mind that you need to know the length. If you are bothered by dazzle or glare, we sell sun visors in various colours as well as wrap-around UV eye shields.

And finally, a radar key will get you into some disabled facilities like public toilets.

In the kitchen

There are many bits of equipment that have been adapted or developed to help visually-impaired people in the kitchen. Even the humble elastic band has its uses (use them to identify the contents of cans – one for tuna, two for fruit etc.). Many difficulties can be got

around with a bit of ingenuity (sugar lumps instead of loose sugar?) or a useful gadget. You'll find a few below.

Liquid level indicators are very popular.

Just pop one over the lip of your mug, pour the water in, and the indicator will beep to warn you when to stop. Some vibrate too.

Bump-ons are little raised plastic 'buttons'; they are adhesive and you can stick them onto any smooth surface. Use them, for example, on your microwave (perhaps to identify the 'on' and 'one minute' controls) and cooker (to help you find your favourite settings).

Cooking baskets mean you can drain food without carrying boiling water to the sink. The basket fits inside a saucepan; you simply put your pasta or vegetables inside for cooking and lift the whole basket out when they're ready.

Talking measuring jugs scales and microwaves do exactly that – talk to you.

Can't see if the water in your pan is boiling? Try a boil alert - a

small round stainless steel plate that sits on the bottom of a saucepan. When the liquid boils, the plate rattles.

Kitchen timers with big numbers can make life much easier. Easy-grip implements can help too. Try, for example, bottle openers, corers and slicers, and corkscrews.

People often find colour contrast enables them to make best use of the sight they have. Try cutting onions on a black chopping board, putting your white plate on a dark mat, or eating off a plate with a rim in a strongly contrasting colour. It helps too if the mat is non-slip and the plate has a raised lip around the edge (avoids spillages when you're carrying it).

Use a talking content identifier to check what's in a jar or tin.

Record your message ('peaches', 'rice') and it will play back when a button is pressed. They are magnetic for tins, or have a strap for non-metallic storage, and they can be used over and over again.

The PenFriend is a simple audio labeller.

You can record your own voice on sticky labels so you'll never again wonder what you've taken out of the freezer. In fact, you can use them all round the house – label your CDs, organise your paperwork, and there are even washable laundry versions.

And a few other odds and ends. . .

- Clamps and adjustable stands to hold things like books in position
- Coin holders, to help you find the right change
- Different shaped buttons that can be sewn inside a garment to identify its colour
- Holders with a non-slip grip that fits round the base of your mug so it's less likely to tip if you knock it
- Holders for your eye drop bottle, making it much easier to handle
- Magnifying mirrors – two sided, with different magnification
- Felt tip pens in different thicknesses
- Pill organisers with tactile characters and Braille markers
- Talking key rings (they tell you the time)
- Talking bathroom scales
- Writing paper with extra thick lines
- Writing, signature and envelope guides so you can write in a straight line and sign in a box
- Really big TV remotes
- 'Boom boxes' – neat little gadgets to play your audio books, talking newspapers etc. from memory stick

We hope this guide has given you an impression of the range of daily living aids and specialist equipment that are available to help people with a visual impairment to stay as independent and active as possible. There are many things we have not had space to include. So if you have a specific difficulty and want to talk to someone about what might help, please do not hesitate to telephone us.

We will always listen, give you information and advice, and never try to sell you something you don't need. It has not been practical to include prices here but we are always happy to give you an idea of cost over the telephone.

Please also get in touch if you want information about:

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any aspect of visual impairment (not only equipment – we can help with holidays, benefits, disabled parking, talking books, services for carers and more);

-social groups for people with visual impairments across Oxfordshire; - our specialist counselling service;

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help with your computer (trained Helping hands for the blind volunteers can visit you to make simple adaptations to things like font and icon size, screen resolution and colours, which may enable you to carry on using your computer for longer, without buying specialist software); - our volunteer visiting scheme (only in Oxford).

Helping hands for the blind is situated a 15 minute walk from Festival place, via Eastrop Park.

The support office is open Monday to Friday 10am—1pm.

Parking and facilities for assistance dogs are available.

If you would like to visit, whether to talk to someone about your situation, to discuss your requirements, pop in for a coffee or to look around our community centre, please make an appointment. This ensures that someone will be available to spend some time with you and show you round.

Helping hands for the blind

The Roger Morris Centre

Eastrop way

Basingstoke

Hampshire

RG21 4QE.

Tel: 01256 463966

Email: admin@helpinghandsfortheblind.org.uk

www.helpinghandsfortheblind.org.uk

Helping hands for the blind is registered as a charity in England and Wales No.1153159