

Adapting Your Home

Whether you live in a house or an apartment, you want to feel comfortable, capable, and in charge of your surroundings—that is what transforms living quarters into a home. Here is some basic advice about making your environment safe and well organized. It is founded on four important principles:

- Increase lighting
- Eliminate hazards
- Create color contrasts
- Organize and label items
- Reduction of glare

Increase Lighting

- Use stronger light bulbs or 3-way bulbs to provide non-glare lighting.
- Put lamps in places where you do close work. For example, put a gooseneck lamp in your reading-writing area. Many companies make lighter light bulbs which simulate natural day light which can be very helpful to someone with low vision.
- Install extra lights in the bedroom closet and other frequently used closets in other rooms.
- Put special lighting over all stairways—the places where accidents are most likely to occur.
- Make sure the lighting level is consistent throughout the house so shadows and dangerous bright spots are eliminated. Install rheostats.
- Be certain you can easily reach light switches from doorways and from your bed.
- Use a night light in the bedroom, hallway, and bathroom.

Eliminate Hazards

- Mark thermostats with brightly colored fluorescent tape at settings you typically use.
- Use non skid, non-glare wax to polish floors.
- Close closet and cupboard doors and drawers completely as soon as you've taken out what you need.

- Pick up shoes, clothing, books, and other items that you could trip over. In fact, put away an object when you are through using it—for the sake of safety and so you can find it easily again.

- Mop up spills as soon as they occur.

Create Color Contrasts

- Put light colored objects against a dark background—a beige chair against a dark wood paneled wall, for example—and vice versa—a black switch plate on a white wall.

- Install doorknobs that contrast in color with the door for easy location.

- Avoid upholstery with patterns. Stripes, plaids, and checks can be visually confusing.

Organize and Label Items

- Keep items that are used together near each other—on the same shelf, in the same closet, or in the same box.

- Label each box using a broad-tipped black felt marker. Or write the contents on index cards and attach the cards to the boxes with rubber bands. Self-adhesive labels are also handy.

Reduce Glare

- Glare can be caused by sunlight or light from a lamp and can make it difficult for an individual with low vision to see when it hits shiny surfaces, such as a glass or highly polished table top, waxed floors, or the TV screen.

- Sunlight can fill the room with light without producing glare.

- Mini blinds are one of the best window coverings because they can be altered during the course of the day to eliminate the glare.

- Avoid using wax on the floor; use a flat finish.

- To make the television easier to see, simply turn the screen away from the sun or a lamp so the light source is behind the screen.