

Vision loss - recreational activities

Many people aged 70 or over will experience significant vision loss as a natural consequence of ageing. For someone who has been sighted all their life, this gradual loss of vision can mean dwindling recreational opportunities, since hobbies and interests may seem too difficult to manage. Eventually, a person may become isolated, confined to their homes and lonely.

Many vision loss organisations have a wide range of recreational equipment available. With a little adaptation and flexibility, many activities can be reworked to suit a person who is blind or has low vision.

Books and magazines

Many books and magazines are available in audio, large print and Braille. Many vision loss agencies, such as Vision Australia, offer a free borrowing system for books in other formats.

Cards, chess and other games

Games equipment can be adapted in various ways to suit a person who is blind or has low vision, such as:

- **Braille versions** – some of the games available in Braille versions include chess, playing cards, Monopoly, Ludo and Bingo.
- **Tactile versions** – some games equipment, such as dominoes or dice, have raised numbers that are easily distinguishable by touch.
- **Large print versions** – many games are available in large print, including cards, Bingo, crosswords and Scrabble.

Cooking

A normal kitchen can be easily adapted to suit a person who is blind or has low vision. Suggestions include:

- Common settings on equipment, such as the oven temperature control, can be marked with brightly coloured or tactile tags.
- Recipes are available in audio or large print formats.
- Use marked measuring equipment or talking scales.
- Brightly coloured or tactile tags help to indicate the top or bottom of equipment such as knives.
- Pre-prepared ingredients, like sauces, can simplify cooking.

Craft

Craftwork is tactile by nature and many activities can be adapted to suit a person who is blind or has low vision. These include:

- Basket weaving
- Pottery
- Knitting
- Painting
- Chinese brush painting.

Exercising at home

Stationary exercise equipment readily available for purchase or hire includes:

- Bicycles
- Rowing machines
- Treadmills.

Gardening

A person who is blind or has low vision will need to orient themselves in their garden and find ways to tell the difference between plants and weeds. Suggestions include:

- A basic layout with straight and uniform garden beds
- Sticks to mark the borders of each garden bed
- Reference markers such as trees, large rocks or garden ornaments
- Flowers with heavy scents and brightly coloured petals
- A brightly coloured strip down the centre of any pathways
- The use of mulch in garden beds to reduce weeds
- Permanent irrigation systems, such as underground tubing, which can be operated by simply turning on the garden tap
- Light gardening tools that can be held in one hand
- An apron with plenty of pockets or a utility belt to hold the gardening equipment
- Confined miniature gardens, such as flowers grown in pots or containers, which need little attention.

Music

A person can listen to music with a radio or CD, cassette or record player. Learning to play an instrument involves playing by ear, using screen-enlarging equipment or the Braille system of music notation.

Radio, television and the Internet

Entertainment services include:

- In most capital cities, a dedicated radio station network (RPH) provides news, information and entertainment for people who are unable to read standard printed material.
- More films now feature audio description.
- Audio-described films on CD are available for those who are blind or have low vision.
- Audio entertainment on the Internet includes music, radio stations from all over the world and conferences.

Telephone services

Services for people who are blind or have low vision include:

- The daily news can be accessed by phone – in Victoria it is read by volunteers, while in most other states an artificial voice system is used. A touch-button function allows the listener to select different sections of the newspaper.
- Groups of up to five people at a time can work together to solve the crossword in the daily paper, with a volunteer acting as the go-between.

Accessing specialised equipment

Many organisations, such as Vision Australia, can provide equipment and advice.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your vision specialist
- Vision loss organisations
- Vision Australia , and Low Vision Services Tel. 1300 84 74 66

Things to remember

- Many recreational activities can be adapted to suit a person who is blind or has low vision.
- Common adaptations for activities such as games or reading include large print, Braille or audio versions.
- Vision loss organisations, such as Vision Australia, have a wide range of recreational equipment available.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Vision Australia

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