



**VISION LOSS  
REHABILITATION**  
ONTARIO

**OVER 101  
HELPFUL HINTS  
FOR  
INDEPENDENT  
LIVING**

Compiled by:  
CNIB VOLUNTEERS & STAFF



**VISION LOSS  
REHABILITATION**  
ONTARIO

1 REVISED OCTOBER 2018 DB

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOPIC	PAGE NO.
INTRODUCTION .....	3
IDENTIFYING MONEY .....	4
USING THE TELEPHONE .....	6
WRITING.....	8
CLOTHING/JEWELRY .....	9
BATHROOM/MEDICATIONS .....	10
AT THE TABLE.....	12
POURING LIQUIDS .....	14
IN THE KITCHEN .....	15
CLEANING & LAUNDRY .....	21
LEISURE TIME.....	22
ODDS & ENDS .....	23

# INTRODUCTION

Since 1918 the staff, volunteers and friends of the CNIB have been sharing information to help people who are blind or visually impaired live more independent lifestyles. This information has been handed down from one generation to the next and is often referred to as the “helpful hints” of the independence business.

Blindness does not prevent people from doing things; it only affects how these things are accomplished. Especially at first, the everyday activities others take for granted may take a little extra time, be more difficult, and be very frustrating!

We’ve picked through thousands of tips and techniques and selected what we believe to be the most practical and popular. Take your time and try our hints. As with so many other things, it will take a lot of practice before you feel comfortable and confident.

Not all our helpful hints will work for everyone. There is more than one way to do almost everything. Be creative and invent your own method. Just remember, a sense of humor and a little patience go a long way!

We would like to thank CNIB clients, volunteers and staff for sharing so many hints, tips and techniques that help individuals maintain their independence at home, at work and in their neighborhood.

# PAPER CURRENCY

There are many ways to identify bills and it really doesn't matter how you do it as long as your method works for you.

1. Some individuals prefer to separate bills by denomination, placing them in different sections of their purse or wallet.
2. You can purchase a special billfold which has different sections for different bills. (These are available from CNIB.)
3. You can fold your bills in a special way for easy identification for example:
  - Leave five dollar bills completely unfolded.
  - Fold ten dollar bills in half lengthwise.
  - Fold twenty dollar bills in half, end to end.
  - Fold fifty dollar bills end to end, then lengthwise.
  - Fold hundred dollar bills in half and in half again.
4. When you receive money from others, ask what each bill is and fold it right away or put it in a special section of your wallet, so you will be able to recognize it later. Take your time, don't be hurried.
5. An electronic bank note reader is available (through CNIB) to identify paper currency. The device is easy to use. Insert a Canadian bank note, push the button at the front of the device, and the reader will announce by voice (in either English or French) the denomination of the bill.

# COINS

1. Coins can be identified by touch. Select one coin at a time and use a fingernail or fingertips to feel the different sizes and edges of each coin:
  - A penny is larger than a dime. Many pennies in circulation have a round smooth edge. Others have a twelve-sided smooth edge.
  - A dime is smaller than a penny and has a serrated edge.
  - A nickel has a smooth edge and is larger and thicker than a penny.
  - A quarter has a rough grooved edge and is larger and thicker than a nickel.
  - A dollar coin (loonie) has an eleven-sided smooth edge and is larger and thicker than a quarter.
  - A two dollar coin (toonie) is larger than a loonie. The edge of the coin alternates from rough to smooth. The centre of the toonie is gold in color and the outer edge is silver.
2. A special purse or coin organizer with separate slots for pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters may be a useful item.

## Cheques

Large print/tactile cheques are available from your bank. You may find it helpful to make your own cheque template with sections cut out for date, cheque amount, and so on.

# USING TELEPHONES

1. All touch tone telephones are identical in the display of the numbered buttons, making it easy to memorize the location of each number.

Numbers are arranged in this way:

- Top row from left to right - 1 2 3
- Second row from left to right - 4 5 6
- Third row from left to right - 7 8 9
- Zero is in the centre of 0

Fourth row use your index finger to skim the buttons and locate the desired numbers.

2. Try the three-finger method in which the second row of buttons (4, 5, and 6) act as the home row. Put your index finger on 4, your middle finger on 5 and your ring finger on 6. With your index finger on 4, reach up to 1 or down to 7. Likewise with your middle finger on 5 it can reach up to 2, down to 8 and 0 and with your ring finger on 6 you can move it up to 3 and down to 9.
3. With practice, it won't be long before you will be able to dial as fast as someone looking at the numbers. ("Lefties" will have to reverse this process, just as with everything else in this right handed world.)
4. A piece of tape, a raised dot, or other marking may be placed on the number 5 button to help people to easily locate the number 5 button or confirm their finger position. (There usually is already a bump).
5. Large print, colour contrasted numbers designed to stick on standard size touch tone telephones are available from CNIB.
6. Contact your local telephone company or CNIB staff to find out about special services such as directory assistance exemption.
7. Big button telephones and other special equipment are available from CNIB and telephone stores.

# USING TELEPHONES cont'd

## Keeping Track of Telephone Numbers

1. Contact your local telephone company or CNIB staff to find out about special services such as directory assistance exemption.
2. Big button telephones and other special equipment are available from telephone stores.
3. Telephone numbers can be written in large print, braille or recorded on cassette tape. Many people keep telephone numbers in a writing pad, notebook, recipe card box or on cassette tape near the telephone.
4. If you are able to read large print, use a wide-tipped black marker on white paper. Depending on your vision, you may choose to write one number on each page or several numbers on a page.
5. Telephones equipped with a memory system, enabling a person to dial a number by pressing only one button, may be useful

# WRITING

1. When signing your name, place a signature guide over the line requiring your signature. Write your name in the space provided. (A variety of signature guides are available from the CNIB).
2. Another way to locate the proper place to sign is to ask someone to make a fold, which you can feel, along the line requiring your signature. (Make sure the ridge of the fold is upward). Have someone place your index finger at the beginning of the signature line and sign your name to the right of your finger.
3. People with low vision may find lines easier to locate if traced with a dark pen or marker.
4. Many people who are visually impaired find it helpful to use dark-lined paper when writing. (Writing templates and dark lined paper are available from CNIB). If the edges of the paper seem to disappear, place the paper on a contrasting surface. For example, if you are writing on white paper, place the paper on a dark place mat, dark table top, or another dark surface. The contrasting surface will make it easier to see the edges of the paper.
5. Many people find it difficult to read materials written in pen. Writing with a wide-tipped black marker on white paper is generally easier to see.

## CLOTHING

1. Clothing in a closet is easier to find when it is organized. For example, garments may be separated by color, or casual clothes may be placed at one end of your closet and formal clothing placed at the opposite end.
2. Place matching outfits (for example a suit jacket, shirt, tie and slacks) on one hanger or several hangers tied together. A variety of closet organizers and shelf units are available in hardware or department stores.
3. To identify clothing color, cut a geometric shape (from cardboard or plastic) to place over the hanger. Put a large print and/or braille label on the geometric shape.
4. In order to distinguish one clothing item from another, look for differences in texture, style, type of buttons, collars, hems, etc. If you have two pieces of clothing which are identical except for color, attach a small safety pin to the tag or label of one garment; sew one button or several buttons on the inside of a hem or a seam to identify colors. (Small, flat buttons work best.) Similarly, small braille clothing tags or an embroidery stitch can be placed on the underside of a garment to indicate color on similar designs of clothing.

## JEWELRY

1. Small boxes are useful to keep items separated. Everything from socks to jewelry to cassette tapes may be stored this way.
2. Picking through many pieces of jewelry to find a particular set which matches can be frustrating. Use jewelry boxes divided into a large number of sections and/or earring trees to keep jewelry separated.
3. To avoid tangled chains and necklaces, screw cup hooks to the inside of your closet door for tangle-free hanging.
4. A variety of plastic trays (like an ice cube tray) and adjustable drawer dividers can help when storing jewelry.

## IN THE BATHROOM

1. If you have a white or light-colored bathtub, buy dark colored contrasting soaps. They are easier to locate than white soap, especially if they float.
2. Use soap on a rope or liquid soap dispensers. They are easy to locate and you avoid the slippery soap problem.
3. A shower caddy (available in department stores) is useful to hang over your shower head and hold personal care items such as shampoo and soap.
4. A clear plastic shower curtain allows more light into the shower area than an opaque or solid one.
5. Use your index finger to guide a small amount of toothpaste onto your toothbrush. If you have your own personal tube of toothpaste, squeeze a small amount directly onto your finger or directly into your mouth. It's much easier and less messy.

## MEDICATIONS

1. If you are taking medication, you may wish to take advantage of the many pill organizers available at drug stores. Some have one section for each day; others are larger and have two or more sections for each day. These are especially useful for people who take several kinds of pills in the morning, at lunch, at dinner, and at bedtime.
2. Organize medication according to frequency of use, in alphabetical order, or in categories used.
3. Large print or braille labels may be placed on medicine bottles to easily identify them. Any personal marking (for example, a piece of tape) will do the trick as long as it is understandable by you. When refilling medications, simply transfer the new medicine to the old bottle or ask your pharmacist to use the same container. If your label will fit on the lid of the bottle, you only need to transfer the lid.

## **IN THE BATHROOM cont'd.**

4. "Bubble Packing" service is available from drug stores. The system consists of a weekly supply of medication per card. "Days of the week" are located along the left side of the card and the time of day is located across the top of the card. The upper side of the card consists of a series of clear molded plastic bubbles, containing the pills; the underside is foil. By pushing down on the bubble, and breaking the foil, medications are easily removed into your hand or small glass. Since the bubble is crushed by this procedure, it is always easy for a blind or visually impaired person to tactually check to ensure medications have been taken.

# AT THE TABLE

1. To locate items at your place setting, start at the edge of the table and with your fingers curled and arms flexed, move gently toward the centre of the table until you find your plate. With fingers low to the table, extend arms and fingers gradually to the right and left to find silverware, teacup, glass, salad bowl, bread and butter plate, etc. Accidents can happen easily, so remember to keep your hands on the surface of the table and move slowly. If you cannot find the item you need, ask for it to be passed to you.
2. To determine contents on a plate, use the tip of your knife or fork to gently probe the food on the plate, noting the difference in the texture, shape, smell, and location of the food on the plate. Try to determine any special characteristics. Are there paper containers of relish? Is the baked potato cut down the middle? Does it contain any sour cream or is a separate container provided? Is there finger picking food on the plate? Does the meat have a "cooking-directions" marker pierced into its middle? Does the meat have a bone? Is the decorative salad cut or are there large lettuce leaves? Is there a separate container of gravy or sauce on the plate?
3. Such questions are endless, yet each is easily answered by thoroughly checking out the contents with your utensils and determining the characteristics of your food before you start to eat. As with most people, you will make the occasional mistake or misjudgment. Laugh it off, learn by it, and go on. If you are doubtful or need affirmation of your plate's content, don't be afraid to ask.
4. A sighted person may describe the location of the various items on the plate. Imagine the plate to be like the face of a clock. For example, if peas are located at the top of the plate, it is said that the peas are at 12 o'clock.
5. You may find it helpful to turn your plate so that foods that require cutting or special attention, such as meat or corn on the cob, are brought to the bottom of the plate (6 o'clock position). In this way they are easier to locate and manage without reaching over other

## AT THE TABLE cont'd.

foods.

6. "Loose" food such as peas or corn can be difficult to pick up. Many people use a "pusher" such as a piece of bread, a roll, or a knife to help guide food onto the fork. Another idea is to gently move the "loose" food, i.e., peas, against a barrier of "solid" food, i.e., mashed potatoes. This will give you the advantage of being able to get under the "loose" food, as the barrier prevents such food from moving around the plate.
7. While eating, direct the motion of the fork or spoon toward the centre of the plate. Food on the plate should be pushed inward for it tends to move out to the edge of the plate during the normal course of the meal.
8. As you eat, be aware of the weight of the food on your fork or spoon. With practice and patience, you will soon be able to gauge whether you are lifting an appropriate amount of food.
9. When sprinkling salt from a shaker onto food, sprinkle first into the palm of your hand to determine the amount and how fast the salt is flowing. This will prevent a fast-flowing shaker from ruining your food.
10. It's easier to put sticky jam, honey, etc., on your bread if you use a teaspoon to scoop it out of the jar and then use the back of the spoon (or a knife) to spread it.
11. People who are visually impaired should keep colour contrast in mind when setting the table. White plates almost disappear on a white tablecloth but show up well against a plain dark tablecloth. Similarly, if food is dark (such as roast beef), use light dishes and if food is light (fish, cheese, eggs) use dark plates.
12. It is fine to make special requests (i.e., to have meat cut or shellfish served out of the shell) when eating away from home.
13. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance at home or when eating out.

# POURING LIQUIDS

1. When pouring cold liquids use your index finger to position the spout over and in contact with the edge of the glass. Slowly pour the liquid into the glass using your index finger to gauge the liquid level. Listen to the change in sound as you pour the liquid. Also, become familiar with the weight of the empty glass and notice the change as the glass is filled with liquid.
2. Frosted or coloured drinking glasses are much easier to see.
3. When pouring hot liquids put your finger slightly over the edge of the cup and stop pouring as soon as you feel the warmth of the liquid. Be sure your finger is placed away from the direct flow of liquid.
4. When pouring hot liquids you may find it easier to place the cup in the sink or on a tray. A liquid level indicator is another alternative when pouring hot liquids. It is a simple battery operated device with two prongs that hang over the inside edge of the cup and beep when the liquid touches the prongs. (Liquid level indicators are available from CNIB).
5. Measure water before boiling. A measuring cup with a spout makes it easier to pour both hot and cold liquids into other containers. For example, fill your teapot with cold water and pour it into your kettle, so that you boil exactly the right amount.
6. People who are visually impaired should take advantage of color contrasts! Pour dark liquids into light-colored containers and light liquids into dark-colored containers.
7. To find the proper place to open a milk carton, locate the seam which runs along one corner edge of the carton from top to bottom. Always open the carton on the side opposite the seam.

# IN THE KITCHEN

1. Hang most used pots and utensils from a wooden strip or pegboard on a wall or cabinet to easily locate.
2. When storing canned products such as fruits, vegetables and soups, reserve a shelf or a section of the shelf for each food group. The food most used (soup for example) may be placed in the most convenient-to-reach location and the remaining cans arranged in alphabetical order according to their contents.
3. Extra shelving wide enough to accommodate one row of canned, bottled, or packaged goods eliminates the need to conduct extensive searches for items. Shelves can be installed on any convenient wall in the kitchen or basement, on the back of a door, in a closet or pantry. Attaching labels to shelf edges will help eliminate the need to label individual products.
4. Shelves can be sectioned off with a plastic straw laid horizontally and glued or taped into position. Strips of wood or dowels can be used for the same purpose. Use easily recognized items as dividers (for example large bottles of mayo or ketchup) to separate canned goods of a similar size.
5. A variety of plastic trays and adjustable drawer dividers are available in hardware and department stores.
6. Canned products, baking products, etc. can be organized in different ways according to frequency of use, in alphabetical order, or into categories used. For example, spices may be divided into two groups - those used for baking (cinnamon, nutmeg, etc.) and those used in main dishes (garlic, celery seed, etc.).
7. To help you find what you are looking for in your freezer, try grouping foods of a similar type - fish, vegetables, or meats for example, into larger bags which you can take out while you find the particular packet you want. If you have some colour perception, differently colored labels and tags or coloured bags may help.

## IN THE KITCHEN cont'd.

8. A simple way to distinguish between a small number of identical containers such as cans, bottles, or salt and pepper shakers is to put an elastic band around one of them. Alternately, select brands so that no two items are in identical containers.
9. Use large print or braille to make labels for spices, etc. When a bottle is empty, you simply transfer the new item to the old bottle to avoid having to make new labels. If the name can be shortened so that the label can be put on the lid of the container, you only need to change the lids.
10. Use a variety of materials and techniques. There is no one material or technique that covers every labeling need. You may elect to use some or all of the methods described here, and even invent some new ones.
11. Do not be obsessed with labeling! Among your food items and household supplies there are a number of items easily recognized by the touch, shake, or smell method. These need not be marked. Good organization in storing canned and packaged products, as well as personal items, and keeping everything in its place will significantly cut down your need for labeling. Label only those things that cannot be distinguished by any other convenient means and keep any labels as short and concise as possible.
12. People who are visually impaired should take advantage of colour contrasts. Work with dark ingredients on a light-coloured counter top or cutting board. Work with light ingredients on a dark surface.
13. Remove the eyes from potatoes with point of peeler or knife before peeling.
14. It is easier to determine if the peel on vegetables has all been removed when the vegetable is wet. The portion of the vegetable that has the peel remaining on it will have a rough texture, while the portion peeled will have a smooth, moist texture.

## **IN THE KITCHEN cont'd.**

15. Keep fingers curled in and downward while chopping vegetables, etc. To gauge the thickness of a slice, put the blade of a sharp pointed knife by the forefinger of the hand that is holding the vegetable, then move knife and forefinger the required distance before cutting. Some vegetables (for example, turnips) should be cut in half and placed flat side down on the chopping board before cutting into slices. The Magna Wonder Knife (available from CNIB) has an adjustable slicing guide that makes it safe and easy to cut slices of bread, vegetables, and meat into different thicknesses.
16. Toss a salad by shaking in a large covered bowl or container. It gets well dressed and there is no mess!
17. Safety should never be overlooked, especially in the kitchen! When working around the stove, avoid wearing anything that might dangle over the burners, such as loose sleeves or ties.
18. Don't store flammables, especially oven mitts and dish towels, near the stove.
19. Be very familiar with your stove and oven before using. Know which knobs control which burners.
20. Place your filled pot on the stove burner before turning the burner on. If you have to place or replace a pot on a burner that is already hot, use a long handled wooden spoon (which doesn't conduct heat) to feel around the edge of the pot, ensuring the pot is centered on the burner.
21. Make sure pot handles do not extend over the front or sides of the stove where they can be easily bumped or knocked over.
22. When frying eggs, use an egg ring (available from CNIB). Grease the ring before placing in the frying pan and drop one egg into each greased ring. A food turner may be slid under the ring to easily

## IN THE KITCHEN cont'd.

remove the egg from the pan.

23. When frying meat which has to be turned, use a two-sided spatula (available from CNIB), which works like a pair of tongs. Some people prefer oven baking or roasting meats because they do not have to be turned over. Bacon, for example, which is very difficult to turn, may be cooked in your oven or microwave.
24. A colander, placed in a sink, provides an easy way to drain water from vegetables, pasta, etc. Pot strainers which attach to the rim of the pot are also excellent for draining water.
25. Explore your oven when cold to ensure you are aware of the position of the rack(s).
26. Stoves, thermostat controls, washing machines, and other household appliances with dials can be marked with small strips of colored electrical tape (several layers make it easier to feel), embossing (demo) tape small strips of colored or clear, embossing (demo) tape, Locator Dots (available from CNIB) or by filing notches. Only mark essential numbers to avoid a cluttered dial. For example, put a piece(s) of bright colored contrasting tape on the oven dial at the twelve o'clock (top) position when the oven is off. Put another piece(s) of tape on the stove where the 350 degree is. When you turn the dial and match or line up the two pieces of tape, you will have a 350 degree or moderate oven. You will easily be able to judge temperatures above and below this point.
27. A wooden spoon or wooden rack puller (which doesn't conduct heat) can be used to locate a hot oven rack, a dish on the rack, or to pull out the rack.
28. When reaching into the oven, prevent burns by wearing long flame-resistant oven mitts which extend to your elbow. (These are available from CNIB). Before removing a casserole or baking dish from the oven, make sure the oven door is completely open and the rack pulled

## IN THE KITCHEN cont'd.

all the way out.

29. If you suspect a casserole or baking dish may boil over or splatter while in the oven, place a cookie sheet underneath to catch the spills. It is easier to clean than the whole oven.
30. Use large print or raised dot (braille) timers as a guide to know when food is cooked. You can also judge the readiness of food by using a combination of sensory clues - touch, smell, hearing, taste or remaining vision.
31. A muffin tin is ideal for baking potatoes, stuffed peppers, or tomatoes. It is easier to locate and remove a muffin tin than several items scattered on the oven rack.
32. For even proportions of mashed potatoes and turnip, use an ice cream scoop. A scoop is also useful for making muffins, cupcakes, etc., because it allows you to get equal amounts of batter in each section and is easier than pouring directly from a bowl or using a spoon. Use a small ice cream scoop to make cookies.
33. To spread peanut butter, or other hard-to-spread foods, use a small narrow spatula.
34. Use a tray or cookie sheet to organize utensils and ingredients when cooking. A tray catches any spills, making clean-up easier, and ensures small items are not misplaced.
35. Use measuring cups in graduated sizes (available in department stores and from Tupperware), rather than a one cup measure with small dividing lines marked in print.
36. To measure a portion of a block of butter or shortening, use a plastic stick which has notches cut for 1/4 cup, etc.

When measuring herbs and spices, sprinkle into the palm of your hand

## IN THE KITCHEN cont'd.

first so you are able to determine how much you are using. This will prevent accidentally adding too much to a dish.

38. Measuring small amounts of liquid such as 1 tsp. vanilla is difficult. Dipping is easier than pouring into a spoon. You may find it beneficial to transfer liquids you use often into wide mouth containers for easy dipping. Large eye droppers or a small plastic syringe are also great for measuring extracts, flavorings, and colorings.
39. To separate egg whites from yolks use an egg separator or small funnel (both available in department stores). Or, break the egg into the palm of your hand and let the egg white run through your spread fingers. The yolk will remain in your hand.
40. Fill a large salt shaker full of flour for dusting baking pans, making gravies, etc. It isn't messy and saves flour.
41. A canning funnel is helpful when pouring liquids into narrow-mouth containers. Square-topped funnels are easier to use.
42. Place a jar lid, pebbles, or marbles in the bottom of your double boiler or kettle. The rattling sound will signal if the water has boiled away.
43. Prevent ants, flour beetles, or other pests from invading your cupboards by leaving sage or bay leaves on food shelves.

# CLEANING AND LAUNDRY

1. Wear an apron with large pockets when cleaning. The pockets may be used to hold cleaning materials such as a dust cloth and polish or may be used to hold small items you pick up along the way and plan to return to their original storage places. Likewise, put cleaning materials in a basket or bucket and carry it around the house with you so all materials will be handy as needed.
2. Avoid spot cleaning! Clean the whole surface to ensure no spots are missed. When cleaning counters, start at one end and work to the other in overlapping strips. Use your free hand to check areas just cleaned for extra stubborn spots. Also work in overlapping strips when dusting, vacuuming, washing floors, etc. In large areas, you may find it helpful to divide the surface into sections such as halves or quarters, with overlapping boundaries. Use pieces of furniture (for example, a chair in the middle of the kitchen floor), or use permanent fixtures to mark the boundaries of each section you are cleaning.
3. Transfer liquid cleaners into containers with pumps for easy use. Containers can be filled with a funnel. Remember that flat-sided bottles upset easily.
4. To fill a steam iron use a turkey baster, a funnel, or a squirt bottle.
5. Safety pins or Sock Tuckers (available in department stores and from CNIB) can be used to keep socks in pairs during washing and drying. Some people find it helpful to buy socks in different colors, patterns or textures for sorting purposes.
6. Wash small items in a pillow case or small mesh laundry bag to keep them from getting lost.
7. To measure laundry detergent, use the scoop provided. Avoid pouring directly from the box.

# LEISURE TIME

1. When playing board games, visually impaired people may find it helpful to use dice that contrast with the color of the board. Black dice are easier to locate on a white board and vice versa. Also, don't be afraid to substitute larger or color-contrasted objects for game pieces that are difficult to locate. For example, use a thread spool in a color that contrasts with the board for a game piece.
2. Playing cards and Bingo cards are available from CNIB in both large print and braille.
3. A variety of adapted tools such as large print and raised line rulers are also available from CNIB. Public Libraries and the CNIB Library have a wide selection of books and magazines on tape.
4. When hand sewing, use a small bowl to keep track of your needle, thread, thimble, etc. Keep a few needles threaded for quick access or use Self Threading Needles (available from CNIB & sewing shops). Adjustable seam guides that screw onto the flat bed of your sewing machine provide a tactile guide to measure seams.
5. People with low vision may find it useful to place a brightly coloured piece of tape on the seam guide.
6. Keep a magnet in your sewing basket to pick up pins and needles.
7. Many people are not aware of all the recreational and leisure resources available in their own community. Contact your Recreation Department, YWCA, YMCA, Adult Education Assoc., Church, Women's Club, Specialty Groups & Leagues in your area to find out about the programs and activities they offer.
8. With any leisure time activity, from wood working to knitting, begin with very basic techniques and continue to build on your skills. People with low vision may find it helpful to use contrasting color and/or larger materials, additional lighting and/or magnification.

## ODDS AND ENDS

1. To identify keys, put a piece of brightly colored tape, which can be easily seen or felt, around the key. Similarly, put a colored plastic hood (available from hardware and department stores) over the key top. Most places which copy keys have them available in a wide variety of colors.
2. Each household item should have a specific place and should be returned there immediately after use. Don't just drop something! That way you won't have to spend a lot of time looking for it when it is next needed. Encourage other family members to also return items to their proper place. After all, organization makes it easier for everyone to find things!
3. It is not necessary to rearrange furniture in a special way in your home, but some changes may be helpful. For example, a coffee table with sharp edges may be moved out of the main circulation area. Also, remember to keep doors, closet doors and cupboard doors all the way open or all the way shut. Half open doors are dangerous!
4. Stairs can be hazardous! Mark the leading edge of each step with a paint or non-skid material of a color which contrasts with the stairs themselves. Paint the handrail in a bright contrasting color. It should extend past the top and bottom steps as a guide to know where the steps begin. Use a contrasting color and/or a different texture floor material, such as carpet, on the top and bottom landings.
5. Good lighting is important for many people who are visually impaired. Incandescent lighting is usually best. Attach lights to the underside of cabinets, over work areas, above the stove, or above your favorite chair. If you find you don't have enough light, move the lamp closer or try a stronger bulb. Three-way bulbs and dimmer switches provide flexibility when more or less light is needed. A goose neck lamp often comes in handy, and a battery-operated flashlight to look at dials is another useful idea.
6. Low vision aids such as hand-held magnifiers, telescopes or binoculars

## **ODDS AND ENDS cont'd.**

often allow persons to continue many tasks that they did prior to their vision loss, for example: reading print, knitting, watching television and locating street or bus signs.

7. Low vision aids do not restore vision! However, they do make things appear larger, closer, clearer or brighter. Using your low vision aid(s) requires some patience and practice, as well as good contrast and lighting. And remember, low vision aids will not harm your sight, they enhance it.
8. For more information about low vision aids, contact your local CNIB Office.
9. Large print numbers, raised numbers, and/or Braille on elevator panels and outside the elevator doors (marking the floor number) are helpful, especially in large buildings. If you live in an apartment complex, place an identifiable marker such as a decoration or door knocker on your apartment door. In a hotel, place an elastic band or twist tie around your door handle to ensure you are at the right room.
10. To easily identify baggage when travelling, place several large strips of contrasting colored tape on your suitcase. When walking with a sighted person, use the Sighted Guide Technique. Hold onto the sighted person's arm just above the elbow in a C-grip, with your thumb on the outside of their arm and your fingers on the inside. You will be able to feel and follow the motion of the sighted guide's body, making this a safe and comfortable method of travel.
11. When walking alone, plan the easiest and safest route to take. Think of landmarks that are easily recognized to assist in keeping travel bearings.
12. When taking a bus, ask the bus driver to announce your requested stop, and sit near the front so that the announcement can be easily heard.

## **ODDS AND ENDS cont'd.**

13. When grocery shopping with a sighted person, it's easy to maneuver through the store if you stand behind the grocery cart, holding the cart handle, and let the sighted person lead, guiding the cart from the front. If you plan to grocery shop alone, call the store in advance and request assistance. Most grocery store managers are more than willing to arrange a mutually convenient time for a clerk to help you find the items you require. Some individuals prefer a volunteer do their grocery shopping. Also, many grocery stores (and drug stores) deliver for a small fee.
  
14. CNIB carries a wide variety of adaptive aids and equipment, everything from sectional wallets to talking clocks. Many helpful items are also available from other organizations and companies. For instance, check if your appliance or thermostat dial is from a company which supplies Braille overlays, or new and larger dials, which are easier to read.