



Aberdeenshire  
Health & Social Care  
Partnership

# Top Tips for Around the house



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## **Are you having difficulties with day-to-day activities around the house?**

If you answered yes, then it is a good time to think about adjustments that might help. Small changes can make a big difference.

Small adjustments around the house can often help you stay independent and active for much longer.

Here are our Top Ten Tips. Follow the tips to help you make adjustments that will meet your needs now and in the future, you may need to use some of the tips together to be most effective. The key is to make the most of any remaining vision and use your other senses fully.

## Tip 1

### Colour Contrast

Increasing the colour contrast between surfaces and objects to help you see them more clearly. You may also find that you are able to see a specific colour more easily, it can be helpful to use that colour to highlight things you need to find.

Colour contrast does not need to be unappealing; you can choose colours and styles to suit the look and feel you want for your house.

#### ***Ways you can increase colour contrast about the house:***



- There is very little contrast between the wall and the sofa, this makes it difficult to locate the position of the seat to sit down safely or to move

past without bumping (see previous page picture on the left). The contrast between the sofa and the wall plus the lighter colours in the cushion help with seeing the position of the seat. With this sofa using a light-coloured throw over the arm of the sofa would also help with finding the position to avoid bumping when walking past (see previous page picture on the left).



- The light switch is quite difficult to see in this photo, using a contrasting-coloured panel around the switch can help with finding it more easily. This could be a painted area around the switch or you can buy switch surrounds/finger plates with a variety of colours through hardware stores or online

***Here are some other examples of where you could use colour contrast around the house:***

- A towel or surface opposite the bathroom mirror that contrasts with your hair colour to help you see when doing your hair.
- Add brightly coloured tape to the edge of doors to help you notice if they have been left open.



- Having a contrasting-coloured coaster on your side table for your cup of tea or coffee will help make it easier to see where the cup is when you go to pick it up again and also helps you to see the clear space to put your cup down. It is best if the coaster is quite thin so if you don't fully get the cup onto the coaster the cup won't tip over.

## Tip 2

### Lighting/Glare

Suitable lighting will differ for each person depending on their sight loss and personal preference. It is important to get a balance of lighting, too much can be as bad as too little. Most people need lighting for each room so they can move around safely as well as lighting for doing tasks, like reading or sorting your socks.

Having even lighting through the house can help save your eyes from having to adjust to different levels of light as you move about. Some people's eyes take quite a while to adjust when lighting gets brighter or dimmer.

Think about the positioning of the TV to avoid glare from windows and light fittings.

Think about the lighting on steps or stairs, it is important that this area is well lit immediately when you want to use the stairs. Avoid lights that are slow to come up to full light, unless you are going to leave the light on for longer periods. You need to be careful that the light isn't shining straight in your face when you are using the steps/stairs or you might find the dazzle interferes with you seeing where you are going.

**Curtains/blinds** - Lightly coloured blinds often allow a lot of light through even when they are pulled. You may need a darker colour to help reduce the brightness.

**Task lighting** - This is light that is close to where you will be doing tasks e.g. reading, craft work, sorting clothes etc. It is often best to have the light over your shoulder or within a foot or 30cm of what you are doing. The light

needs to be onto the task, not shining into your face. Having a lamp that you can move helps you get it in just the right position each time you go to do something.



A torch can also be helpful for seeing into cupboards and other areas that can be a bit dark. Having a battery powered or mains light installed in wardrobes or cupboards, can make them well-lit and you have your hands free to find what you are looking for (See picture above).

## Tip 3

### Being organised

A place for everything and everything in its place. All items need to go back into their place when they have been used. This is particularly important for people with sight loss.

Think about where you keep toxic household chemicals, like cleaning products, so they are well away from edible items for you or pets.

Have places for each item of technology. As the technology we use day to day gets smaller it is easier to lose, they are also often black and get lost on dark coloured sofas. Have a place to keep TV remote controllers, they can be easily misplaced and it is frustrating to have to search for them every time you want to change the channel. Maybe a storage caddy or a pocket that hangs over the side of the couch.



In the bathroom, you could have a drawer for each type of item you might need e.g. hair products, dental hygiene products.

Have a place for library books and talking newspapers, whether from the local library or further afield. It can be helpful to have a system to mark which talking book library pouches are ones that have already been read and which ones are waiting.

A place to keep keys. You could consider a hook that you always put your keys on to when you come in. Be mindful that this is not too close to the door where it could be reached by someone trying to break in.

## Tip 4

### **Remove clutter**

It is easier to manage your day-to-day tasks about the house if surfaces and floors are clear of clutter. It also helps to reduce the risk of trips and falls. It is particularly important to keep cables tidy and away from routes you walk through.

It can help when using magnifiers and other aids for reading to have a clear space on a table so you can get the lighting right over where you are working, can get everything into a comfortable position and have room to move with the magnifier.

Think about removing items in cupboards and drawers that you don't use to make it easier to find the things you need.

## Tip 5

### **Safety**

Safety needs to always be a priority in and about the house.

Think about whether it might be helpful to have the edges of steps at the front and back door highlighted so they are easier to see. A grab rail may be useful to keep you steady when getting into and out of the shower.

Keeping clear routes through the house - For some people this will be routes through the middle of rooms, for other people it will be a clear area along a wall so you can keep your hand on the wall while you are moving through the house.

Positioning of heaters – If you are using portable heaters be sure that they are kept clear of trailing clothes or blankets and that they are out of your way when you are walking around the house. Ensure the flex is not trailing across the clear route you walk along.

## Tip 6

### **Marking equipment**

Many items of equipment we use about the house can have dials and buttons that are difficult to see or feel.

It can be useful to mark the dial on items like the iron, with the position of the hottest setting you use and the lowest setting you use with bumpers or loc dots.

It can be useful to mark the on/off button and along the side of the TV controller for the volume and channel

buttons. You might also want to put coloured or textured tape onto the main controller you use so you do not get mixed up with the other controls. Many new TVs now have tactile markings/Braille on the remote control to help make it easier to find the buttons you need. Some remote controls are also set up to speak when changing the channel.



To help getting plugs into sockets put a raised line on the plug and a raised line on the socket, so that when it is in the right position you can feel the lines lining up.

## Tip 7

### **Identifying products and items about the house**

Being able to find the particular item you are looking for when you need it can make a big difference to how you feel about your independence.

Shampoo and conditioner often have the same shape and when you are in the shower it can be difficult to use a magnifier or other aids. Using elastic bands can help, with a little thought you can work out the best system for you, e.g. it can be useful to have one band for shampoo and two for the conditioner because you use shampoo first then conditioner second.

**Clothes** - Can be labelled directly on the clothes or on the coat hangers. Straight onto the clothes you can use a penfriend device with special stickers that allow you to record a message with colour, style or size information (see picture below).

You can also mark the label with a large print letter using permanent marker or a shaped button for colour. Some people also label the coat hanger using large print or Braille signs. You then put the clothes back on the same hanger when you have finished with them.

There are some aids that can check the colour of the item for you. You can get colour indicator apps for your phone or use a colour indicator device. Here are some apps you might like to check further: TapTapSee and Seeing AI.



## Tip 8

### Timing – microwaves, timers, smart home devices

Timing is critical for many activities in the kitchen. Some microwave and cooker timers are not easy to use for people with sight loss because they rely on seeing small displays.

- Manual wind-up timers (see picture below on the left) are often easy to mark and use rather than digital versions (see picture below on the right).
- There are some specialist timers that speak back the time as you set it and update you with the time left.
- Smart home devices, such as Amazon Echo, Google Home or smart phones allow you to ask the device to set a timer for a specific amount of time.



## Tip 9

### Cooking

If you are buying an oven or hob, consider the following:

**Oven and hob dials:** One of the common issues with cookers is difficulty reading the settings on the dials. If you are buying a cooker - choose controls with strong colour contrast and that click as they are turned to help locate the setting. Choose dials that are at the front of the cooker/ hob and have clear and easy to see numbers rather than information under glass.

**Hobs with rings:** Choose a hob with rings that are easily identifiable and obvious to see.

**Oven door:** Make sure the kitchen layout allows the cooker door to open fully to help protect you from burns and allow greater access when putting things into and out of the oven. If the oven door folds down make sure to choose one that slides back in under the oven, such as slide and hide models.

#### ***To make the most of your existing oven:***

Make sure your oven light works, replacement bulbs are available in many DIY stores.

Also choosing oven gloves that extend up to your elbow will protect against burns.

You can get silicon covers



that go on the front of the shelves in the oven to prevent burns if you nudge your arm against it. These are available in red so may also help with seeing the shelves (in picture on the previous page).

There are silicone ‘pickles’ for induction hobs to mark the position of each ring (in picture on the right).



## Tip 10

### Smart home devices

There are many smart home devices that can be useful for managing tasks about the house.

Smart home devices can be linked to your lights, heating system and even with your fridge to keep track of when items are going out of date.

Making simple adjustments can make a big difference to your independence and ability to do various tasks about the house.

For further assistance with issues relating to managing tasks due to sight loss you can refer yourself to the Visual Impairment Team:

Phone **01467 536700**

Email [visualimpairment@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:visualimpairment@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

If you need assistance due to other health conditions you can refer yourself for an Occupational Therapy assessment by calling the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Customer Services on **03456 08 12 06** and choose option 2.

If you purchase a product due to a medical need or if you have a physical disability (including sight loss), then VAT exemption may be available. VAT relief forms are available on the UK Government website and are called Eligibility Declarations by a disabled person for VAT relief, use the following webpage address: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)