

**Visual Impairment Services  
Highland**

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## **How to make changes at home to see things more easily**

If you find it hard to see things clearly even after you've had your eyes tested and are wearing the right glasses or contact lenses, you may have low vision.

You may have been told that there is nothing that can be done to improve the medical condition of your eyes.

People with low vision have useful sight that they can use in their daily lives.

Your home needs to be a place that you feel comfortable in.

If you are having problems finding light switches, power sockets or the edges of stairs and doors, there are simple changes that can be made to make them easier to see.

## Using contrast on electrical fittings

You may find it hard to switch on and off or plug in electrical equipment. Here are some tips that with the aid of an electrician, will help you use electrical appliances more easily.

- Use switches and sockets which contrast with the walls. For example, a dark red light switch would contrast well with a white wall
- To add even more contrast, you could put a contrasting light or dark strip of tape around the outside of the switch.
- To help you find pull-cords for lights, tie brightly coloured contrasting ribbon material onto them
- To help you find the control knobs on your electrical and gas appliances, use brightly coloured contrasting markers (called bump-ons) so that you can see and feel the controls. Or you can fix on written labels marked in big letters with a thick black felt-tip pen

## Colour and contrast at home

It is harder to see things that are similar in colour to the background that they are on. Contrast is about how much something appears to stand out from its background because of its colour or shade.

Things can be made easier to see by putting them on a contrasting background. You can use different colours or different colour shades to make them contrast from the background. For example, a dark green door handle on a dark green door may be difficult to see. It would be easier if the colour was different. For example, a white door handle would be much easier to see on a dark green door. If the colour shade was different, it would also be easier to see, for example a light green door handle on a dark green door.

## How to make contrast work for you at home

### Painting and decorating

Here are some tips to help you choose the right types of paints and wallpaper to make things easier to see at home.

- Gloss paints, which are shiny, can cause glare. To prevent this, use paint that have a matt finish instead
- Things that stand out better on plain or subtly patterned surfaces or backgrounds but tend to blend into the background against boldly patterned surfaces. If you are thinking about putting up new wallpaper or buying new furnishings such as curtains or sofas you could pick plainer and fabric.
- Having plain walls and furniture does not mean that your home has to be plain. You can make your home more cheerful by intruding patterned cushions and tie backs on your curtains

- If you paint or put tape on the edge of work surfaces and shelves in a contrasting colour shade, it will make the edges easier to see.
- Having the best lighting for you is also very important in the kitchen

There are many easy-to-see gadgets available to make preparing food much easier. Here are just two examples:

- You can buy different coloured chopping boards. You could use a dark one for chopping up light coloured food such as potatoes and a light one for chopping up dark coloured food such as green beans
- You can also buy tin openers in different colours to make them contrast with your work surface so that you can find them

## Using contrast in the bathroom

- Choose soap dispensers, bar of soap, toilet roll holders which are a contrasting colour from your bathroom wall, wash basin and toilet.
- If you are buying new toilet seats, wash basins or tiles, choose ones which contrast from the surfaces they are near. For example, it is easier to see a dark blue toilet seat on a white toilet bowl or a green bar of soap against a white wash basin.

## Using contrast in the kitchen

Contrast in the kitchen can make cooking and preparing food easier and safer, for example:

- It is easier to work on kitchen surfaces that are plain and contrast in colour or shade from the kitchen walls
- Avoid putting up glass shelves as they are difficult to see

## Between walls, floors and doors

- It is easier to see walls, floors, ceilings and doors if they are painted in colours or colour shades that contrast from each other
- If you are changing the colours you already have at home, choose colours for the floor, ceilings, walls and doors first. After that, pick contrasting colours for smaller things such as skirting boards and picture rails
- If a border is stuck around the edge of a room it can also help to make the walls stand out
- Plain or patterned borders are particularly useful in hallways and corridors to help you to find your way around
- Although light-coloured walls can help make the room bright, white walls can cause glare and be uncomfortable

## **How to use contrast on the main fixture of your home**

There are lots of changes that you can make to the main fixtures of your home, such as doors to make them easier to see. Here are some ideas:

### **One the staircase**

- The handrail or banister on your staircase will stand out more if you paint it in a contrasting colour or shade from the stairs and the wall
- To make the edge of each step stand out more, mark each one with white paint, or fix a contrasting white plastic or metal strip on the edge of each step

### **On doors**

- To make doors stand out, paint the door in a contrasting colour or shade from the door frame. Painting the door frame a contrasting colour or shade from the wall will also make it easier to see

- To make it easier to see door handles, use handles which contrast in colour or shade from the doors they are fixed onto. Door handles can be either painted, a coloured strip can be stuck on or the handle can be replaced
- If you have cupboard doors that swing open, a contrasting strip on the inside or on the outside edge of the door will help you notice it when it has been left open
- If you have sliding glass doors, it can be difficult to tell when the doors are open or closed. To make them easier to see, stick on a coloured transfer design. This can be attractive and stop you from having any nasty accidents

## **Using contrast in the kitchen and bathroom**

You can use contrast all over your home. Here are some more ideas, which are especially for the bathroom and kitchen as these areas can seem particularly daunting if you have trouble