

Tools and Resources for Low Vision

Macular Degeneration Research, a BrightFocus Foundation program, shares this collection of ideas, tools, and resources for living with low vision. Some are free features already built into a phone or computer; others are apps, devices, services, or simple everyday solutions.

Built-In Accessibility Tools

Before buying anything, explore the accessibility features already on your phone, tablet, and computer. Many are free and surprisingly powerful.

Smartphones & Tablets

- **Screen Readers: VoiceOver / TalkBack** — VoiceOver is built into iPhone and iPad; TalkBack is built into Android. Both speak buttons, text, notifications, and app content. May help with: eye fatigue when reading.
Price: FREE — built into compatible Apple and Android devices
- **Built-In Magnification & Larger Text** — iPhone and iPad include built-in Magnifier app, screen zoom, and adjustable text/display settings. Android devices also provide magnification and text-size controls. May help with: menus, labels, medication bottles, messages, and photos.
Price: FREE — built into iPhone and iPad; Android equivalents are also built in
- **Read Aloud / Select-to-Speak** — Reads selected or on-screen text aloud without requiring full screen-reader use. May help with: eye fatigue when reading.
Price: FREE — built into compatible devices
- **Contrast, Color Filters & Invert Colors** — Adjusts display colors, brightness, and contrast to improve visibility. May help with: glare, low contrast, or difficulty distinguishing interface elements.
Price: FREE — built into compatible devices
- **Voice Assistants & Voice Control** — Use speech to place calls, dictate messages, set reminders, open apps, and search. May help with: reducing the need to locate small on-screen controls.
Price: FREE — built into compatible devices

Computers

- **Computer Magnification: Mac / Windows** — Built-in magnification for enlarging screen content; newer Macs also include the Magnifier app for camera-based viewing. May help with: email, documents, web browsing, presentations, and online banking.
Price: FREE — built into compatible computers
- **Computer Screen Readers: VoiceOver (Mac) / Narrator (Windows)** — Built-in screen

readers with speech output and keyboard navigation. May help with: reading long documents or navigating without relying on visual detail.

Price: FREE — built into compatible computers

- **High Contrast, Larger Pointer & Text Scaling** — Makes text, cursors, menus, and controls easier to locate. May help with: reduced contrast sensitivity or central vision loss.

Price: FREE — built into compatible computers

Magnification, Reading & Visual Assistance

- **Apple Magnifier (iPhone/iPad)** — Uses the camera to enlarge text and objects, adjust brightness and contrast, apply color filters, freeze images, and access additional recognition features on supported devices. May help with: reading menus, medication labels, signs, appliance controls, and quick spot reading.

Price: FREE — built into compatible iPhone/iPad

- **Seeing AI (Free, iOS/Android)** — Microsoft app that reads text, recognizes products and currency, describes photos and scenes, identifies colors, and can read handwriting. May help with: reading mail, menus, labels, packaging, and quick visual questions.

Price: FREE | SeeingAI.com

- **Be My Eyes (Free, iOS/Android)** — Connects users with sighted volunteers and AI-powered visual assistance through a phone camera. May help with: matching clothing, checking appliance settings, labels, and troubleshooting.

Price: FREE | BeMyEyes.com

- **Lookout by Google (Android)** — Uses the camera to read text and provide information about objects and surroundings. May help with: Android users who want one app for common visual tasks.

Price: FREE | <https://tinyurl.com/33j8pns4>

- **ReBokeh (iOS/Android)** — Low-vision-focused camera app with zoom, stabilization, brightness, color, inversion, and contrast controls, plus AI description features. May help with: using remaining functional vision to see signs, exhibits, screens, or objects across a room.

Price: FREE to download; optional paid features may be available | ReBokeh.com

- **Envision AI / Supersense** — AI-assisted object recognition, scene description, and other visual tasks. May help with: people who want more specialized reading and recognition options.

Price: FREE to download; optional paid plans/features may be available

- **Google Lens** — Recognizes text, products, landmarks, and other visual content through the camera. May help with: copying printed text, identifying products, and translating signs.

Price: FREE

Magnifiers & Optical Aids

- **Handheld and Stand Magnifiers** — Traditional illuminated magnifiers are simple, portable, and inexpensive. May help with: spot reading such as prices, labels, recipes, and mail.
Price: about \$10–\$150+
- **Portable Video Magnifiers** — Small electronic screens enlarge print and often allow contrast/color changes and image freezing. May help with: reading on the go while preserving a visual approach.
Price: about \$100–\$1,500+
 - **Smartlux Digital Handheld Video Magnifier:** Ergonomically designed, portable video magnifier with HD camera that features a 5" reflection-free display.
<https://tinyurl.com/4c3db8y3>
 - **RUBY:** Handheld video magnifiers with crisp, sharp image, high-contrast modes, and built-in LED. <https://tinyurl.com/yvnn2hxn>
- **Desktop Video Magnifiers (CCTV)** — Large-screen electronic magnification systems can enlarge books, photos, paperwork, crafts, and handwriting. May help with: longer reading sessions, hobbies, writing checks, and detailed handwork.
Price: about \$500–\$4,000+
- **High-Power Reading Glasses / Spectacle Microscopes** — Specialized near lenses prescribed for close work. May help with: sustained near tasks when standard reading glasses are not enough.
Price: about \$50–\$800+
- **Telescopic / Bioptic / Prism Lenses** — Specialty lenses may assist with selected distance tasks or field awareness. May help with: individualized needs identified by a low-vision doctor.
Price: about \$300–\$2,500+; custom fitting can cost more
- **Glare-Control & Tinted Lenses** — Selective filters, wraparound sunglasses, visors, or absorptive lenses may reduce glare and improve comfort. May help with: outdoor light sensitivity and situations where contrast is washed out.
Price: about \$15–\$300+; prescription options can cost more

Wearables & Hands-Free Technology

- **Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses** — Camera-equipped glasses with open-ear audio and voice-controlled AI features. They are not designed as medical assistive devices, but some people with low vision use them for hands-free questions, photos, calls, messages, and information about what is in front of them. May help with: quick hands-free assistance when holding a phone is inconvenient.
Price: about \$224–\$459+ depending on generation, frame, and lenses
<https://tinyurl.com/y8cwtys>
- **Ally Solos Glasses by Envision** — Accessibility-focused AI smart glasses designed to

read text, describe surroundings, identify objects, translate, and answer questions by voice. May help with: hands-free reading and visual information.

Price: about \$699 | <https://tinyurl.com/5z9asmbs>

- **Envision Glasses** — More advanced assistive smart glasses with reading, recognition, and live assistance capabilities. May help with: people who want a dedicated wearable accessibility device.

Price: about \$2,499–\$3,499 | letsenvision.com/glasses

- **OrCam MyEye** — A wearable camera-based device that attaches by a magnet to your glasses designed for reading text and recognizing selected visual information. Availability, models, and features can change, so confirm current options before purchasing. May help with: discreet hands-free reading and identification tasks. Price: varies by model and purchase plan; payment plans may start around \$75/month | orcam.com/en-us/orcam-myeye-3-pro

Navigation & Getting Around

- **GoodMaps Explore** — Accessible indoor/outdoor wayfinding and navigation designed with blind and low-vision users in mind; indoor features depend on mapped locations. May help with: airports, hospitals, campuses, transit, and unfamiliar buildings. Price: FREE to download; availability/features vary by mapped location [GoodMaps.com](https://www.goodmaps.com)
- **Aira** — On-demand access to trained visual interpreters through live video. May help with: navigating complex spaces, reading displays, travel, shopping, and tasks where a human description is useful. Price: FREE access may be available in participating locations; paid plans also available | [Aira.io](https://www.aira.io)
- **Apple Maps with VoiceOver (iPhone/Apple Watch)** — Provides spoken turn-by-turn directions and works with Apple's built-in VoiceOver accessibility. May help with: familiar smartphone navigation and spoken directions; specialized orientation-and-mobility tools may be better for complex travel needs. Price: FREE — built into compatible Apple devices
- **BlindSquare** — Accessible GPS and points-of-interest information designed for blind and low-vision travelers. May help with: independent outdoor travel and learning what is nearby. Price: about \$40 | [BlindSquare.com](https://www.blindsquare.com)
- **Orientation & Mobility Training** — A certified specialist can teach systematic scanning, safe street crossing, cane skills when appropriate, route planning, and strategies for field loss. May help with: glaucoma-related peripheral field loss or anyone feeling less confident traveling independently. Price: varies; may be FREE or covered through rehabilitation programs, agencies, VA benefits, schools, or insurance

Reading, Audiobooks & Accessible Libraries

- **BARD Mobile / National Library Service (NLS)** — The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled at the Library of Congress offers free talking books, magazines, and braille materials. Download and listen on an iPhone, iPad, Android device, Fire tablet, or use a free NLS talking-book player. Some books can be accessed through Alexa-enabled smart speakers. Your local NLS network library can help you apply and get started.
Price: Free for eligible users | loc.gov/nls/how-to-enroll/sign-up-for-bard-and-bard-mobile
- **Libby** — A simple way to borrow audiobooks and eBooks from your public library. You can adjust text size and use accessibility features on your phone or tablet.
Price: Free with a participating library card | [Libbyapp.com](https://libbyapp.com)
- **Bookshare** — An accessible online library created for people who have difficulty reading standard print. Books are available in audio, large text, braille, and other accessible formats, and the reading experience can be customized for more control over text size, contrast, highlighting, and audio.
Price: Free for qualifying U.S. students; adult membership is about \$79.99/year
[Bookshare.org](https://bookshare.org)
- **Apple Books** — Built into Apple devices and easy to use with VoiceOver, larger text, and other Apple accessibility features. Useful for purchasing and listening to audiobooks or reading eBooks on an iPhone or iPad.
Price: Free app; book and audiobook prices vary
- **Audible** — A large commercial audiobook service with a wide selection of popular books. It can be convenient for people who listen frequently and want new releases or titles that may not be available through a library.
Price: About \$8–\$23/month depending on plan | [Audible.com](https://audible.com)
- **Kindle** — The free Kindle app offers adjustable text size, brightness, contrast, and other reading settings. It can be helpful for people who still enjoy visual reading but need larger or more comfortable text.
Price: Free app; eBook prices vary
- **Voice Dream Reader / Speechify** — Text-to-speech tools that can read documents, PDFs, web pages, and other text aloud. These may be useful for longer articles, work documents, or reducing eye fatigue.
Price: Free or paid depending on the app and plan

Home & Everyday Living

- **Voice Assistants & Smart Speakers** — Siri, Alexa, and Google Assistant can use voice to set timers, ask the weather, make lists, play books or music, control compatible lights, and manage reminders. May help with: avoiding small displays and creating hands-free routines.

Price: Voice assistants are free; Smart speakers start around \$80

- **Voice-Controlled Lighting & Smart Plugs** — Turn lights on before entering a room and adjust compatible lighting without finding switches. May help with: safer navigation and consistent task lighting.
Price: about \$10–\$100+ per device/set
- **High-Contrast & Tactile Markers** — Raised dots, large-print labels, contrasting tape, bold cutting boards, and tactile appliance markings make controls easier to find. May help with: kitchens, laundry, thermostats, remotes, and medications.
Price: about \$5–\$30
- **Talking / Large-Display Devices** — Talking watches, kitchen timers, scales, thermometers, blood-pressure monitors, calculators, and clocks reduce dependence on small visual displays. May help with: routine daily tasks.
Price: about \$10–\$150+
- **Task Lighting** — Adjustable lamps positioned close to the task often improve visibility more than simply making the whole room brighter. May help with: reading, cooking, grooming, hobbies, and medication management.
Price: about \$20–\$200+

Learning, Work & Hobbies

- **Photomath** — Uses a camera to recognize printed or handwritten math and explain steps. May help with: helping with math homework when visual access to worksheets is difficult.
Price: FREE to download; optional paid plan available
- **Khan Academy** — Lessons, transcripts, audio explanations, and web-based learning. May help with: students and lifelong learners.
Price: FREE
- **Quizlet / Brainscape** — Flashcards and study tools that can work with screen readers when sets are accessible. May help with: vocabulary, definitions, and exam preparation.
Price: FREE to use; optional paid plans available
- **Duolingo** — Language learning with substantial listening and speaking content. May help with: people who enjoy learning through audio.
Price: FREE to use; optional paid plans available
- **Merlin Bird ID** — Identifies birds by sound as well as images. May help with: continuing birding when seeing fine field marks becomes difficult.
Price: FREE
- **iNaturalist** — Helps identify plants and animals and connects observations with a community. May help with: nature exploration with camera/AI support.
Price: FREE

Low-Vision Help & Support

- **Low-Vision Specialist / Vision Rehabilitation Specialist** — Evaluates functional vision and can recommend optical/electronic aids, lighting, contrast strategies, and task-specific training. May help with: adjusting daily activities that are becoming difficult despite medical treatment.
Price: cost varies by provider and insurance coverage
- **Occupational Therapy for Low Vision** — Can help adapt cooking, medication management, self-care, hobbies, work tasks, and home safety. May help with: developing practical strategies in real-life environments.
Price: cost varies; may be covered by insurance when medically appropriate
- **Hadley** — A nonprofit that offers free, practical help for adults adjusting to vision loss. Offers short workshops on everyday living, technology, recreation, braille, and working. Hadley also offers discussion groups and the opportunity to speak with a specialist if you are not sure where to begin.
Price: FREE | [HadleyHelps.org](https://www.hadleyhelps.org) or 800-323-4238
- **American Printing House for the Blind (APH) ConnectCenter** — Information and referral hub for people who are blind or have low vision, families, and professionals. May help with: finding services, technology guidance, and next steps.
Price: FREE | [APHConnectCenter.org](https://www.aphconnectcenter.org)

Further Reading & Additional Resources

- Tech Tips for Those with Visual Impairment (brightfocus.org/TechTips)
- Home & Personal Safety for People with Macular Degeneration (brightfocus.org/HomeSafety)
- How Occupational Therapy Can Improve Life with Low Vision (brightfocus.org/OT)
- Adapting to Life with Low Vision (brightfocus.org/LowVisionChat)
- Tips for Moving Through the World with Low Vision (brightfocus.org/LowVisionTips)

About Macular Degeneration Research

Macular Degeneration Research, a BrightFocus Foundation program, supports groundbreaking research exploring the root causes of, prevention strategies, and treatments for macular degeneration, a leading cause of vision loss.

***Disclaimer:** The information provided is a public service of BrightFocus Foundation and is not intended to constitute medical advice. Please consult your physician for personalized medical advice; all medications and supplements should only be taken under medical supervision. BrightFocus Foundation does not endorse any medical product or therapy.*

***Price note:** Prices and subscription fees shown are approximate and are subject to change. Some free services require a compatible device, internet access, library membership, participating location, or eligibility.*

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