20 Activities for the Visually Impaired

People with vision impairment will often require help with every day tasks they could once complete on their own. They may also require support to enable them to stay in touch with the community, friends and their leisure pursuits.

Age-related vision loss is common as we grow older and can often be corrected with spectacles, eye drops, surgery and other medications. Some eye conditions however, such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataracts and other diseases may evolve into blindness or partial-blindness presenting considerable challenges to those affected.

Most people with disabilities wish to be as independent as possible.

Barriers confronting people with vision impairment:

- Lack of confidence
- Diminished mobility (to avoid falling)
- Increased loneliness
- Social exclusion (many public places such as cinemas, restaurants, theaters etc are not easily accessible)
- Feelings of being 'a burden'.
- Lack of knowledge of services available to them
- Poverty

Tips for communicating with visually impaired people

- Don't talk too loud.
- Use normal language; there's no need to avoid words such as "look", "see".
- Don't point or say 'over there'. Be specific "It is on the bed to your left".
- Identify yourself as you enter: "Hi Mavis, it's Linda".
- It is acceptable to describe colours, patterns and shapes.
- Don't patronize them. Don't assume you have to make things 'easy' for them.
- Check if help is required and ask the person for instructions on how to help.
- Don't channel the conversation through a third person.
- When walking with them describe the terrain; steps, carpet.
- Always respect the person's individuality, dignity and independence.
20 Activities for Vision Impaired People

1. Read Aloud

Find out what sort of books they like and read to them.

2. Talking Books

Borrow 'Talking Books' from your local library.

3. Share Jokes

Amuse each other with jokes.

Related: Jokes to Share

4. Tactile Games

Play tactile Dominos or Tic-Tac-Toe.

5. Go out for coffee

Take them to a coffee shop once a week for exercise and sensory stimulation.

6. Air Dry Clay

Encourage them to work with air dry clay; use moulds or create a special memento.

Related: Air Dry Clay Activities

7. Join a Social Group

Invite your client to join a group of other vision impaired people for support and socialization.

8. Find a volunteer

Seek out a volunteer for regular visits and companionship.
9. Pet Therapy

Find out what sort of pets they like and invite someone with docile pets to visit.

Related: Pet Therapy in Nursing Homes

10. Gentle Exercise

Aqua aerobics or yoga with clear verbal instructions is popular for fitness and pleasure.

Related: Gentle Chair Exercises

11. Listen to the Radio

Local radio is a source of exciting and interesting programs. Search for:

- Talk back
- Science programs
- Book Reading
- Spiritual broadcasts
- Music

Related: Free music playlists for the elderly

12. Gardening

Buy a couple of pots, potting mixture and some herb seeds; parsley, basil, thyme. Caring for plants is very therapeutic.

13. Make a Salad

Supervise them as they prepare themselves a fruit or vegetable salad.

- For fruits: Buy soft fruit such as bananas, kiwi fruit and grapes. Serve the fruit salad with ice cream.
- For vegetables: Buy zucchini, green beans, asparagus, and carrots. Ask them to peel and chop the vegetables and then cook for them in a microwave for 4-5 minutes on high.

Related: How to Start a Garden Club for Seniors
14. Enjoy Trivia Games

Share quizzes, word games and riddles from Golden Carers.

Related: Quizzes to Share

15. Go for a walk

A walk in the park with a partner for the sights and sounds of nature.

16. Go fishing!

Find a safe pontoon in your local city for safe fishing. Outdoor sports are good for the body and mind.

17. Create a Bird Sanctuary

Engage clients to help create a bird sanctuary in your backyard.

Related: How to create a backyard bird habitat

18. Visit some children

Ring your local nursery school and enquire whether you can take a client for a visit. The laughter and voices of children can lift the spirits.

19. Decorate Cookies

Engage and assist your client to decorate cookies; place icing on one cookie and top with another cookie.

20. Cook Something

Cook something together; the client can break eggs into a bowl, measure sugar and flour, stir. Cooking together provides the opportunity for wonderful conversations & sensory stimulation.

Related: Cooking with the Elderly: Recipes to try

Books to Support and Inspire the Vision Impaired

For clients that still have some vision, buy good magnifying glasses. Otherwise borrow 'Talking Books'
or seek volunteers to read aloud twice a week for 30 minutes.

- **Touching the Rock: An experience of Blindness - by John M. Hull**
  Autobiography; instructive and profoundly touching.

- **The Island of the Colour Blind - by Oliver Sacks**
  The story of the small Pacific atoll of Pingelap where a congenital mishap led to most of the island's inhabitants being color blind.

- **Nightwatch - by Errol Broome**
  Little girl Chippy attends the local school. Her heightened awareness of sound, smell, and space uncovers foul play.

- **The Country of the Blind - by H. G. Wells**
  A mountaineer named Nunez slips and falls into a valley cut-off from the rest of the world where inhabitants are all blind.

- **If You Could See what I Hear - by Tom Sullivan**
  Blind from birth, Tom tells you stories that will make you laugh out loud.

- **Stars Come Out Within - by Jean Little**
  Autobiography of Canadian children's author Jean Little, blind since birth.

- **A Dolphin in the Bay - by Diana Noonan**
  A young boy's relationship with a dolphin helps him overcome his fears.

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**What activities have you found to work well for visually impaired clients?**