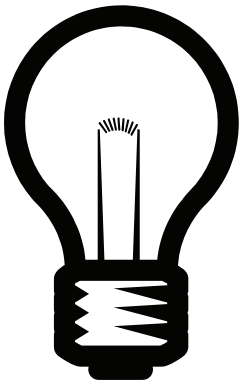


Enhancing Low Vision: Lighting



Thomas Edison produced the first commercially successful incandescent light bulb over 125 years ago. Today there are many types of lighting choices available. Each lighting type has its pros and cons. It is important to consider all your options when learning to adapt to and live with the challenges of low vision.

Finding the right light for you is the most important thing. What works for one person may not work for another. To help establish some guidelines to help in your search for the best light for you, here is some basic lighting information.

There are two main categories of lighting:

General or Overhead Lighting – These lights illuminate an entire space or room.

Task Lighting – This lighting is used for a specific activity, such as, reading, writing, knitting, etc.

Types of lighting:

Incandescent – A yellow light commonly used as a light bulb for a light fixture, desk or table lamp.

Fluorescent – A tube light, which gives off and even blue light. Very inexpensive and is often used in public buildings and places. This blue light can often be harsh due to brightness and can flicker causing eye strain.

Halogen – Provides excellent contrast with the brightest and whitest light. It is great to use when lots of light is needed. However, the bulb burns very hot and can pose a fire-hazard if caution is not taken. Never leave a halogen light on unattended and make sure that it is not operated near flammable materials, such as, curtains and draperies.

Full Spectrum – This is the closest you can get to actual sunlight. Just as the name implies it covers the entire range of colors. However, they don't have a UV filter and they use fluorescent tubes, which enhance blue light. Blue light is responsible for glare, which can be a big challenge to you managing your low vision. Glare coupled with flickering can lead to additional eye strain. Also, many people do not find this type of lighting bright enough.

Glare Be Gone



Glare is often a major obstacle for those with low vision. Ironically glare is most often the result of the lighting source that you are using to help you see.

To help reduce glare when reading or writing make sure that your task lighting source has a shade that you can adjust. Also, if you have a natural light source such as sun coming in your window, you can reduce the glare several ways. Blinds, shades or a sheer curtain can provide just what you need, and remember always position your chair and table so you aren't looking directly at the light coming in the window.

Blue light waves (given off by: sunlight, fluorescent and full spectrum lighting) create glare. Sunglasses or reading glasses that are "Polarized" or tinted with an Amber tint will help reduce the glare that comes from lighting that emits blue light waves. Polarized lenses for your glasses are a good solution to help reduce glare, especially if the light is reflecting off of a flat surface, such as a book, newspaper or magazine.

Tips to Try

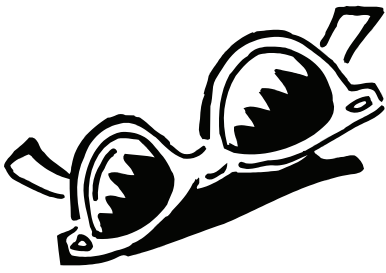
Utilize general lighting to provide illumination throughout a room coupled with additional task lighting near your activity. Good general lighting will help eliminate shadows; the task lighting will provide ample lighting for your area of activity.

Try to move lamps close to your work. An adjustable lamp can be maneuvered to the side of your activity to help avoid glare. If you are writing place the lamp on the opposite side of your writing hand, e.g. right-handers place the light on your left; left-handers place the light on

your right.

Hats with visors help limit the amount of light that enters the eye and may help reduce glare.

You may have to experiment with various types and levels of light to find the combination that provides the most comfort and best performance for your unique needs. If you are experiencing a lot of challenges with glare or lighting in your home discuss your lighting needs with your Low Vision Specialist. Also, if you are experiencing glare while doing daily tasks you can speak to your eye-care physician about special tints that can be applied to your glasses to help reduce glare and eye strain.



Our SightConnection store has a large selection of sunglasses and a variety of lighting options. Many of our sunglasses are tinted and/or polarized to help reduce glare when walking, gardening or doing other outdoor activities. Stop by SightConnection to try before you buy.

CSBPS has a Low Vision Clinic and Low Vision Specialists that can demonstrate the different types of lighting mentioned in this article and help you find the most effective lighting, for your personal needs. Please feel free to contact us for more information or to schedule an appointment (206) 525-5556 or (800) 458-4888.

For additional information on lighting research, tips, etc:

The Lighting Research Center (LRC)
(518) 687.7100 or www.lrc.rpi.edu



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Programs and Services

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- Education, information and referral services
- Assistive Technology resources
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Since 1965, our mission has been to work with individuals, families and communities to restore, maintain and enhance the independence and well-being of people with impaired vision.

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