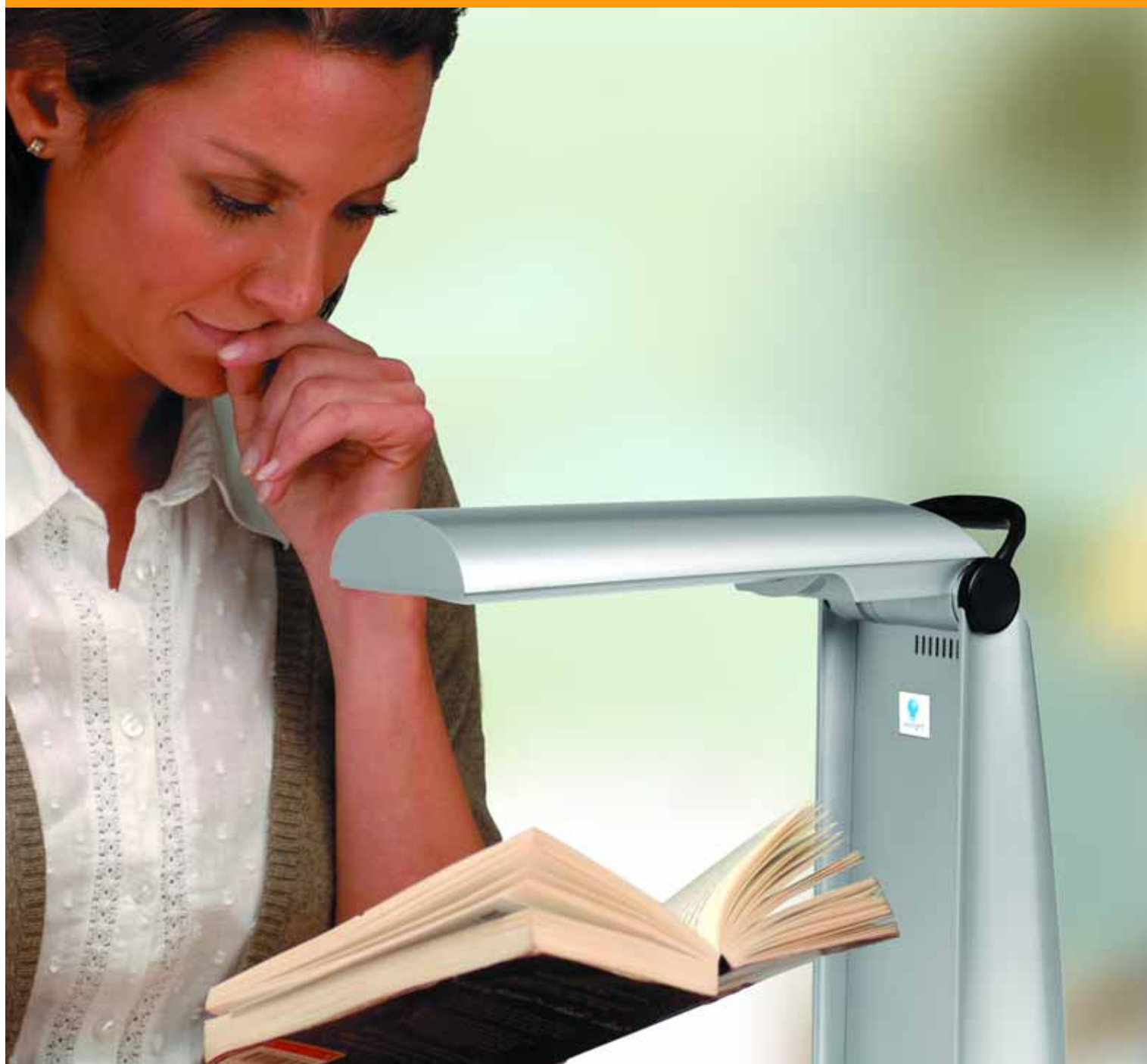


Make the most of your sight Improve the lighting in your home

RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust



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Introduction

This booklet has been produced by Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and Thomas Pocklington Trust. We want to demonstrate good lighting practice by giving ideas, hints and tips on how to light your home more effectively with the different types of household and task lighting that are available and their benefits.

RNIB supports blind and partially sighted people and is the UK's leading charity offering information, support and advice to anyone with a sight problem. We specially select, source and develop products that help blind and partially sighted children and adults live independently.

Thomas Pocklington Trust is a leading provider of housing, care and support services for people with sight loss and a major funder of research and development including guidance on housing design and lighting at home.

Contact details are at the end of this publication.

Eye health facts and figures

Making the best use of lighting is important for everyone, but even more so if you are blind or partially sighted. Good lighting is essential and yet it is often overlooked. Making some simple changes to lighting within your home can be done quite easily with general and task lighting, and will not necessarily cost you a lot of money.

One in eight people over the age of 75 years in the UK is blind or partially sighted and many more have sight loss that affects their everyday lives. Most people over the age of 60 could benefit from better lighting at home. Many older people do not change any of the lighting arrangements in their homes as their vision deteriorates.

Research funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust found that existing lighting in many homes was poor. Thinking about how we light our homes, or making appropriate adaptations to an existing lighting arrangement, can ease many of the practical problems people face with daily tasks such as making a cup of tea, preparing a meal, or getting about safely.

This was demonstrated through improvements to the lighting in the homes of over 100 people with sight loss who live in Pocklington properties. New design guidance for architects and other housing professionals has also recently been published by Thomas Pocklington Trust.

Eyecare

Looking after your vision is very important. Having regular sight tests at the opticians, wearing the correct spectacles and using effective lighting will help you make the most of your sight. A recent project found that a substantial number of people over 65 years of age, attending A+E departments after a fall, had sight loss that could have been improved if they were wearing correct spectacles. For some older people, wearing inappropriate bifocal and varifocal spectacles may also increase the risk of falls. Please discuss this with your optician. Most health treatment under the National Health Service (NHS) is free, although there can be charges for some things. If you are over 60, you are entitled to free prescriptions and sight tests under the NHS. If you are over 50, you can also get a free sight test if you meet certain conditions.

Why is lighting important?

Everyone needs good levels of light and as we get older we all need more. Light entering the eye is focused on the retina at the back of the eye, which transmits the visual signal to the brain. As the eye ages, less light reaches the retina. Most people at 60 years old need three times more light than when aged 20.

Whilst most people with sight loss need and benefit from enhanced lighting, there are however some eye conditions that cause people to experience glare problems in normal lighting levels, which they feel are uncomfortable or even intolerable for them.

Light entering an older eye is also more 'scattered', which can make objects more difficult to see because contrast is reduced. For example, the edges of steps may be hard to see, and colours may not be as clear as they used to be. Some eye conditions can make this scattering worse.

Sometimes eyes need more time to adapt to varying light levels within the home. Some people find when they go from a bright room to a dark room it may take several minutes for their eyes to adjust to the new light levels. Having consistently even and controllable light levels throughout the home is important. It can be more comfortable and will allow people to move around safely.

Poor vision is one of the major risk factors in falls in older people and good lighting in the home can help reduce the risk. The areas of the home where accidents occur most commonly are in the kitchen and on the stairs. Improving lighting reduces the risk of trips and falls.



Different types of lighting

General lighting provides background lighting to the room. This can be electric lighting, usually from ceiling or wall lights, or from natural daylight.

Task lighting directs light where it is required for detailed activities such as reading and writing, when using a magnifier and personal care.



General lighting

General lighting enables people to see the size and shape of the room and the main objects within it. Around the home, there are different rooms and areas to light, each with a different purpose, and people need to think carefully about what type of lights they fit. It is important to consider the light needed for both day and night and to balance additional lighting with available natural light.

Natural daylight

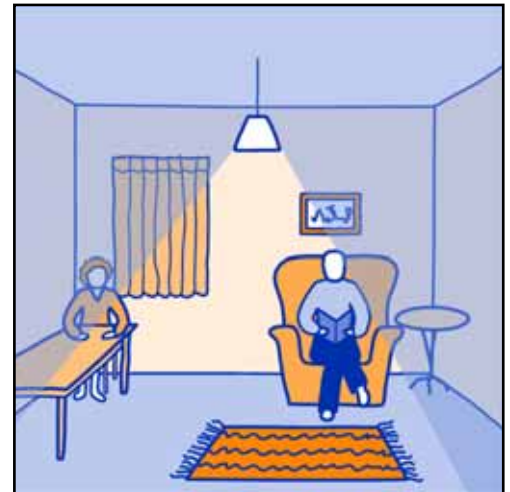
Making the most of natural daylight will help improve the general light in the home during the day. Light through a window may need to be controlled by using blinds to stop bright light and glare. Blinds with horizontal or vertical slats allow the amount and direction of light entering a room to be controlled. Windows and net curtains should be kept as clean as possible. When open, curtains should hang clear of the window so that they do not obstruct the incoming daylight. White windowsills and frames are more effective in reflecting natural light into a room.

Electric lighting

Electric lighting allows more control over the lighting in the home to meet specific needs. This may include the choice of ceiling or wall-mounted lights, the bulbs, the lampshades, and how many lights are needed in a room. To improve and increase the amount of light in a room, it is quite tempting just to fit a stronger light bulb into an existing light fitting. This may not be the best or safest option as many light fittings and lampshades are not suitable for more powerful bulbs. It may be better to increase the number of individual lights within the room to get a more even spread of light throughout. This can be done by adding lights on tables or taller lights standing on the floor. Floor standing uprights bounce light off the ceiling which can light up a dark corner.

This image of a kitchen illustrates how effective it can be to make the most of natural daylight, controlling it with vertical blinds and additional lighting. The main kitchen light is central on the ceiling, illuminating as wide an area as possible however, when a person is working at a surface they could cause shadows. By adding under-cupboard lights, the shadowing is eliminated on the work surface making it a brighter, safer place to work.

Good tonal contrast between room surfaces also assists visibility. Contrast between floor and cupboards can help orientation in the room. Contrast between the worktop and the wall behind it helps when placing objects on the top. Contrast between the wall and the electrical switches and sockets can make them easier to locate. Contrasting handles on cupboards and drawers are also helpful.



Poor lighting



Good lighting



Choosing general light fittings

Choice of light fitting or lampshade affects the amount and direction of light. Ceiling lights are normally the main light source for most rooms in the home. These light fittings are mounted on the ceiling, often centrally, but two fittings or more may be used in a larger room. There are large ranges of fittings, bulbs and light shades available.

Light fittings used with ceiling lights

Angle and cylindrical shades

These are the most common types of shade available. They are open at the bottom to project light out and downwards. The bulb is generally visible which may cause glare. Lighter coloured shades will reflect light better than a dark coloured shade. There is a wide range of shade designs available. Some do not have the bulb visible and therefore glare is reduced. Angle shades fitted upside down are known as uplighters, which project light onto the ceiling and eliminate glare.



Round shades

Round or 'ball' type shades are often made of paper and are popular, cheap to buy and easy to fit. They cover the whole bulb which diffuses the light, providing an even distribution of light, without any glare. Using a round shade is often more effective and comfortable than an angle shade.



Multi-arm pendant light

This fitting hangs from the ceiling with a number of bulbs fitted with glass shades. Use of opal or frosted glass hides the bulbs and cuts down glare so that light is then spread evenly around the room.

Strip lights

These are very common, especially in kitchens. Strip lights are generally ceiling mounted lights that use fluorescent tubes and provide high levels of even light. Most strip lights come supplied with a diffuser cover which fits over the tubes and it is recommended that the diffuser is always used to control glare.



Spot lights

These provide directional light onto a specific area, but can produce very bright 'pools' of light that many people find problematic. They can be fitted on the ceiling and used for some task lighting purposes but are usually not sufficient alone for general lighting.



Wall lights

These fittings are lower and closer to the eye and can cause glare, especially when they have clear glass shades. It is best to choose a wall light that reflects light up and out across the wall and ceiling rather than directly into the room, ideally with a solid shade or cover to hide the light bulb. Positioning on the wall is also important as you should not be able to see the bulb directly.



Practical hints for general lighting

- Make the most of daylight by keeping windows and net curtains clean, keep curtains back from windows to let the most light through.
- Make sure window surrounds are painted white or a light colour to reflect natural light into the room.
- Blinds, particularly those with vertical slats, can help control the amount and direction of daylight coming into the room.
- A good even distribution of light throughout the home is essential. Avoid shadows, dark corners and 'pools' of light that can cause difficulties.
- The best way to make a room brighter is to illuminate the ceiling and top half of the walls.
- Light coloured lamp shades provide more general light around the room than dark coloured shades.
- Avoid lamp shades that allow people to look directly at the bulb.
- Use a round shade as they spread light evenly, without producing a glare problem.
- Use switches and dimmers to control the amount of light.
- Wall lights should have a solid shade or cover to reduce glare from the light bulb.
- Try to keep walls in a light colour as this will help reflect light around the room, giving more even lighting.

Remember: Improving the lighting in your home does not have to be a big or expensive job. Making small changes to light fittings by using existing electrical wiring, is a cost effective method of making appropriate adaptations to the home.



Different types of light bulbs

A range of light bulbs (referred to as lamps by lighting professionals) are used in both general and task lights. Different bulbs will give different types of light and effects.

Tungsten or GLS bulbs

These bulbs, also known as household bulbs or old style light bulbs, are used in both general and task lighting. Light is produced by heating a tungsten filament. They are available in a wide range of shapes such as pear, round or candle and are most commonly used in ceiling, table and many task lights. They can have different outer casings such as clear, pearl or soft tone, which can make a difference to possible glare problems.



Advantages

- cheap to buy
- once switched on give instant full light output
- dimmable with a dimmer switch

Disadvantages

- not energy efficient and more expensive to run
- produce a lot of heat and can be uncomfortable

Fluorescent tubes

Fluorescent tubes have been used in ceiling lights for many years, especially in the kitchen. Light is produced by an electrical discharge within the tube. The lamp requires control gear which is incorporated within the light fitting. Fluorescent tubes come in a variety of white colours from warm yellow to cool blue.



Advantages

- around five times more efficient than a tungsten bulb and cheaper to run
- do not get very hot
- last around eight times longer than a tungsten bulb

Disadvantages

- needs specialist and expensive dimming switches to be able to adjust light levels

Energy saving bulbs

Energy saving bulbs are essentially fluorescent tubes bent into different shapes to make them more compact; they are also known as compact fluorescent lamps (CFL). The control gear is included within the bulb. They are a direct replacement for traditional tungsten bulbs and are available in a variety of shapes, including sticks, spirals and globes, as well as the familiar traditional lamp shapes. They come in a variety of colours from warm yellow to cool blue. A major problem with this type of bulb is that it takes some seconds to reach full brightness as they need time to warm up. This makes them unsuitable for use in hallways or stairwells where instant light is needed.



Higher quality CFL energy saving bulbs are available that warm up more quickly to their maximum brightness and these can be identified by the Energy Saving Trust logo printed on them. However, they may be more expensive. Conventional dimmer switches cannot be used with most current energy saving bulbs. As technology improves and changes, these issues may be resolved and it is worth checking on the RNIB and Pocklington websites for the latest guidance.

Advantages

- around five times more efficient than a tungsten bulb
- do not get very hot
- lasts around eight times longer than a tungsten bulb

Disadvantages

- most are not dimmable with conventional household dimmer switches
- once switched on they may take a short time to reach full brightness

Halogen bulbs

These bulbs produce a bright 'white' light. They are more efficient than tungsten bulbs, but less efficient than fluorescent tubes or energy saving bulbs. They give instant light, can be dimmed by using a dimmer switch and will last twice as long as tungsten bulbs. The most common halogen bulbs are small and used in spotlights, but recently halogen bulbs that look like the familiar tungsten bulb have been introduced. These can be used as a more efficient replacement for tungsten bulbs and so are suitable for places like hallways and stairs where instant full light is needed.



Advantages

- dimmable with a dimmer switch
- once switched on they give instant full light output
- around twice as efficient as a tungsten bulb and cheaper to run
- will last around twice as long as a tungsten bulb

Disadvantages

- not as energy efficient as fluorescent or energy saving bulbs and therefore more expensive to run
- produce a lot of heat and can be uncomfortable, especially when used in task lights

LED

Light emitting diode (LED) or solid state lighting is the technology of the future. LEDs commonly produce light with a blue/white appearance. They are cheap to run and will last much longer than other types of bulbs. They are now being used widely in new cars, in torches and some task lights. Light fittings using LEDs are being developed for future household use.



Lighting recommendations for the home

Kitchen

Fluorescent strip lights fitted to the ceiling will provide high levels of general lighting and are available in different lengths. Diffusers should be fitted to strip lights. Use under-unit lighting to illuminate work surfaces when preparing a meal. Some under-unit fittings may use lights that plug into an electric mains socket, and don't require any changes to electrical wiring. Lights over the hob, for example as part of a cooker hood, can help you see the contents of pans.



Task lights can provide additional light. Rechargeable portable task lights are good for use in the kitchen as there are no trailing wires to trip over.

Lounge

Lighting should be flexible and easily controlled, with a combination of ceiling, wall and task lights. Use round ceiling shades to give even light. Aim for an even distribution of light and avoid lampshades and spotlights that expose bulbs. Task lights can be used for reading in an armchair.



Hallway and stairs

For safety reasons this is one of the most important areas of the home. Consider carefully the colour and contrast of carpets and flooring to be used with lighting as heavily patterned carpets can cause visual confusion when trying to see the edge of stairs. Use old style tungsten bulbs, halogen bulbs or fluorescent tubes that reach full brightness immediately. Avoid using energy saving bulbs that take time to warm up.



Bathroom

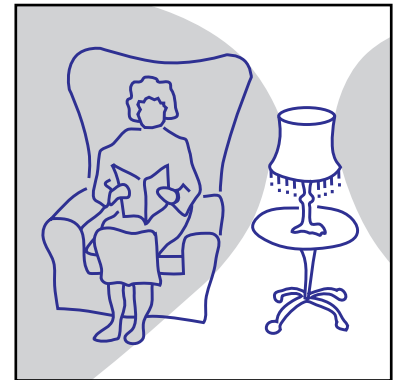
Good general lighting to achieve an even lighting level over the whole room can be provided by a fluorescent ceiling light, typically circular or square, with a good diffuser to minimise glare and provide protection against moisture. All bathroom lights should have protected fittings appropriate for the moist environment in a bathroom. Small fluorescent lights above the mirror, or to either side of it, should also be fully enclosed. If lights are switched on using a pull cord, this should contrast against its background, making it easier to see. Whilst an electrician would be required to fit and install additional lighting in the bathroom, the benefit is that you would have good lighting at all times.

Making the most of task lighting

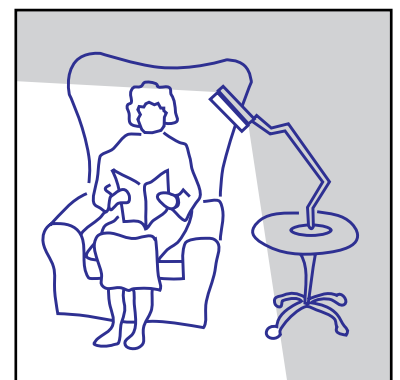
Even with the best general lighting fitted in your home, the amount of light available may still be inadequate to enable you to see close-up detailed tasks such as reading, writing, knitting or sewing. Relying on daylight alone is not a practical option for close detailed tasks either, as it is not consistent. There is a considerable difference between a sunny and an overcast day. Plus the amount of daylight in a room decreases very quickly when moving away from the window. Reading in poor or dim lighting levels will not damage your eyes, but it will be more difficult and tiring.

Using direct lighting for specific activities, often at short distances, for example two or three feet or less, is known as task lighting. A task light two feet from a book will give you 25 times more light than a ceiling mounted light that is 10 feet away. Using a task light directly onto the task/activity you are doing will make it easier to see and less tiring to do.

Your choice of task light will depend on what you are doing, the level of light required and where the task is located. Task lights come in different styles using several types of light sources, for example fluorescent and halogen. The cost of task lights can vary depending on the type, but generally they are not too expensive.



Poor lighting



Good lighting

Different task lights

Adjustable task lights

These lights use compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) that produce a good 'white' light and do not get hot. Used in the correct position they will provide good light distribution onto a page or a task. They have arms that are adjustable into the required position. The light head is also movable and can be easily positioned as needed. Some task lights have heavier base weights to provide extra stability. Smaller task lights are also available and may be easier to use, as they are not as heavy and therefore easier to move around the home for different tasks.

In most adjustable task lights, a CFL fluorescent bulb is fitted as standard. However, there are different CFL bulbs available that will give out different brightness levels. It is important to identify the light and bulb for your particular needs. In some lights available from high street stockists, a bulb may be fitted that has a different colour appearance, for example it may be warm yellow or white.

Remember: it's important to choose a bulb that is best suited to your needs.

Desk lights

These can be easily adjusted to use at a table or desk to give high levels of light for a specific task. They are available in various designs.

Larger ones have flexible arms, similar to the flexi-arm light, or spring arms like the multi-angle light. The arms can easily bend into position to direct the light to where it is most needed.

They may be fitted with clamp bases for attaching to the edge of a table. Alternatively, they may have heavy bases to stand directly on a desk or table. These lights are heavier and care needs to be taken when moving them.



flexi-arm light



multi-angle light

Smaller desk lights can be used on a dressing table or bedside table. These lights also have flexible arms for positioning the light where needed and are less heavy. Desk lights are available in various colours and finishes. The black lightweight desk light has a flexible arm and a tilting shade. On the base there are two small recesses to easily store and locate a pen and pencil. The metallic-finish effect desk light has a flexi-arm with a contrasting black on/off button on the base.

Most desk lights are supplied with small fluorescent bulbs, typically 11watt or 18watt. They are relatively cool when in use. Desk lights fitted with tungsten halogen bulbs can become very hot and are less satisfactory for close work.

Floor standing lights

These can be placed next to a chair or table for reading, writing, knitting etc. Some may be adjustable in height.

Floor standing task lights generally have flexible heads so that the light can be directed onto the task where it is needed. With some lights, the light can be directed upwards onto the ceiling, turning the light into an uplighter, similar to the flexi-vision floor light.

Floor standing lights are available in various colours and finishes. The white floor standing light also has a flexible arm with a magnifying mirror.

Lights are fitted with fluorescent bulbs that will not get too hot. They are more efficient and cheaper to run than those with tungsten halogen bulbs.



lightweight desk light



metallic-finish desk light



flexi-vision floor light



white floor standing light

Practical hints on adjustable task lights:

- A long bulb provides a good spread of light and is ideal for tasks, such as reading, which may take some time.
- An adjustable task light can be placed on a desk or table with the light shining directly onto the task, positioned below eye level between you and what you are doing, as illustrated on the front cover of this booklet.
- Task lights are easy to use and very flexible, enabling light to be positioned to suit individual needs. Ensure the light is below eye level to avoid glare.
- Be aware of heavy bases – a bracket fitted to a table may be a more practical and a safer option.
- Some adjustable task lights that use CFL bulbs may flicker when first switched on. Turning the task light away from your eyes when switching on will minimise any effects of flicker.
- A floor standing adjustable task light is recommended for armchair tasks such as reading.
- If you sit with your back to the window during daylight hours, natural light will shine over your shoulder onto what you are doing.

Portable task lights

A portable task light makes it easier to use one light for many tasks around the home, such as reading a book in a comfortable armchair or in bed, sewing at a table or preparing food in the kitchen. It is ideal to take away on holiday.

Portable lights may have fixed stands that are not adjustable to different positions. Others fold neatly away and may incorporate a carrying handle, making them easier to move around.

Some portable lights are fitted with rechargeable batteries and last for hours without being connected to the mains. They are ideal for use in the kitchen or anywhere around the home, as there are no trailing wires. The white folding light has a contrasting on/off switch on the back and the silver folding light switches on and off automatically when you open and close the unit.



white folding light



silver folding light

The white portable light is also compact and folds, but it is mains operated and is more suitable for use in a more permanent position.

Generally, portable task lights have 13watt CFL fluorescent bulbs fitted which are low heat bulbs. This means the lights are safer and cooler to touch. The folding craft light is supplied with an energy efficient bulb that lasts up to 10,000 hours.

Practical hints for portable lights:

- They are easy to set up and use.
- They are lightweight, easy to carry around the home, school or workplace.
- A portable task light with rechargeable batteries can be used without having to plug into an electric mains socket, which reduces the chances of tripping over trailing wires.
- A protective carry case is available with some models.

LED battery lights

Small battery powered lights using light emitting diodes (LEDs) are readily available from high street stockists. They have a long life and low energy consumption, but most give relatively low amounts of light and are therefore suitable to light up small dark areas, such as inside a cupboard. The LED cupboard lights are easy to operate; simply press the front of the light to switch on and off!



white portable light



folding craft light



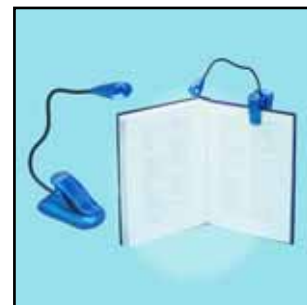
LED cupboard light

Book lights

These are an alternative to task lights, and ideal for reading around the home or when travelling. They are small battery operated lights that clip onto a book. Some can also be used freestanding. They offer a good source of light on a specific page but should be used for short periods only. Both the flexi-arm book light and telescopic book light have a super light emitting diode (LED) bulb which provides three times as much light as a regular LED bulb. The flexi-arm book light has a flexible arm that enables you to direct the light to where it is required. The telescopic book light neatly folds into a compact unit – making it easier to carry around with you.

Book lights are also useful when you are out and about and they are discreet enough to use in a restaurant when reading the menu.

Book lights are usually fitted with LED bulbs.



flexi-arm book light



telescopic book light

Where to get additional lighting information, advice and support

Lamps and lighting can be purchased from a range of high street retailers. The task lights described in this brochure are all available from RNIB. Details of how to order are given below.

RNIB

As well as the task lights highlighted in this guide, RNIB offer an extensive range of products which help support people with sight problems to live independent lives, learn new skills and get on with everyday life. From clocks and watches to kitchen equipment; games and toys to computers as well as home and mobile phones. Ask about our Big Print newspaper, our range of stationery such as diaries and calendars as well as leisure magazines covering a range of interests. To find out more contact RNIB Helpline.



Telephone **0303 123 9999**

RNIB Helpline
PO Box 173
Peterborough
PE2 6WS

Correspondence is welcomed in any format – print, braille, audio tape, Moon and computer disk.

Email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

Visit our Online Shop to browse our complete product range and order online at **rnib.org.uk/shop**

Thomas Pocklington Trust

Thomas Pocklington Trust is a leading provider of housing, care and support services for people with sight loss in the UK. Our operations offer a range of extra care and supported housing, residential care, respite care, day services, resource centres and community based support services.

Our research and development programme aims to identify practical ways to improve the lives of people with sight loss, by increasing social inclusion, independence and quality of life, improving service outcomes and focussing on public health issues.

Further details, including information on lighting and housing design, specialist consultancy, and training for key professionals, such as occupational therapists and rehabilitation workers in housing, health and social care, can be found on our website at pocklington-trust.org.uk

Thomas Pocklington Trust is an independent charity and does not endorse particular products or suppliers.

A range of research publications and good practice guidance is available on our website to download free, together with information about our design guide "Housing for people with sight loss – A Thomas Pocklington Trust design guide", which details over a hundred ways that good housing design can improve the lives of people with poor sight. The guide is published by IHS BRE Press Ref: EP84, ISBN 978 1 84806 029-6

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Other contacts

This guide has been published by RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust, who would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Andy Fisher, Focal Point UK. There are a variety of places you can go to for advice and information on sight loss and making the most of lighting.

RNIB Helpline

The RNIB Helpline is your direct line to the support, advice and products you need. We'll help you to find out what's available in your area and beyond, both from RNIB and other organisations.

Whether you want to know more about your eye condition, buy a product from our shop, join our library, find out about possible benefit entitlements, be put in touch with a trained counsellor, or make a general enquiry, we're only a call away. Telephone **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

Low Vision Services

These services will help people make the most of their vision. Specialist low vision practitioners assess vision and provide any magnifiers and low vision devices on the NHS to meet specific needs such as reading and watching TV.

Low Vision Services may be based in a local hospital, located in opticians' practices or offered from a resource centre run by the local society for the visually impaired. Low Vision Services can provide advice and information on how to use general and task lighting, but they don't issue lighting equipment.

To find out how to get an assessment at a low vision service, contact either a local hospital eye department, a GP, Social Services (the visual/sensory impairment team), or the local society for visually impaired people.

Directgov

If you have access to the internet visit Directgov, the official government website for citizens. It's the easy way to access public services and information delivered by the UK government.

Website **direct.gov.uk**

Social Services

Many Social Services have a visual (or sensory) impairment team, who provide a range of services to help people with sight problems. Social Services employ specialist staff such as Rehabilitation Officers or workers who can provide support with more specific advice and information on lighting. Occupational Therapists in Social Service departments may also be able to provide some general advice on lighting.

Contact your local council and ask for a visual impairment assessment for lighting from the local Social Services department, or a GP can make a referral.

Local societies for visually impaired people

A network of local societies and associations throughout the UK provide local services such as eyecare, product advice and training. They may be able to provide advice and information on lighting. To find a local society contact the National Association of Local Societies for Visually Impaired People (NALSVI) on **01302 57 1888**.

You could get help with paying for lighting adaptation

There may be grants and funding available from your local council that can help you cover the cost of lighting adaptations in your home. Rehabilitation Officers or Occupational Therapists in Social Services would be able to assess lighting needs and advise on what's available. Generally, there are two main grants available. The Small Adaptations Grant scheme covers adaptations costing up to £1,000 (this may vary in some areas), and is ideal for simple adaptations such as lighting in the kitchen. The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) covers adaptation work generally costing over £1,000 and is means tested (this may also vary in some areas).

Contact your local Social Services for further details.

Make the most of your sight

Improve the lighting in your home

Produced by Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and Thomas Pocklington Trust, this booklet demonstrates good lighting practice. It provides ideas, hints and tips on how to light your home more effectively and shows the different types of household and task lighting that are available and their benefits.



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