Living with Vision Loss:

Technology Tips and Products
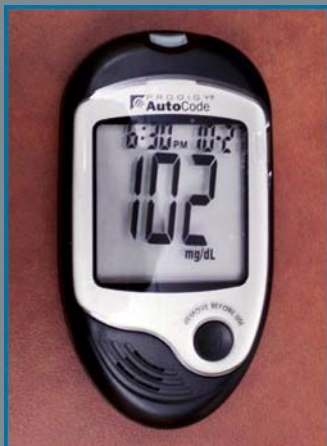
www.VisionAware.org

Reading Braille

Talking Microwave

Talking Blood Glucose Meter

You can live independently with the help of technology.

Until they begin to lose their sight, people rarely consider that everyday items such as clocks, ovens, and computers are designed for people with 20/20 vision. This means that most devices, if unmodified, are unusable for the millions of people in the U.S. experiencing vision loss.
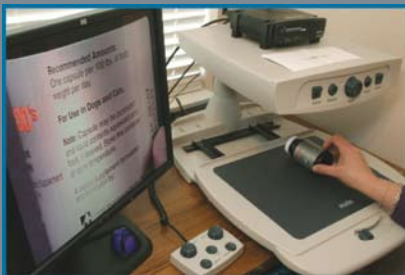
Assistive technology offers a world of possibilities.

"Assistive technology" products are everyday items that are adapted to suit people with vision impairment. The products range from talking ATMs to software that magnifies or speaks the information on the computer screen out loud.

- **Many electronics, such as clocks, microwaves, blood glucose meters, ovens, and bathroom scales,** have been modified to "speak" in addition to visually displaying their outputs.

- **Large print, audio, braille, and electronic books** are available through the National Library Service's Talking Book Program for free through membership programs such as Bookshare, and through many commercial sources. Audio books are also available online or at your local library or bookstore.

- **Talking ATMs** enable people with vision loss to receive financial information through synthetic speech and perform transactions in private by using headphones. Many banks also offer accessible online banking and some offer telephone banking as an alternative.

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Technology Tips and Products

Desktop Video Magnifier

Portable Magnification Device

Talking Scanner

- **Video Magnifier**s (also known as Closed Circuit Televisions, or CCTVs) use a video camera to focus on an object — such as a letter, prescription bottle, book, or photo — and project an enlarged image of the object on a screen. Many different models are available, from portable handheld magnifiers to large desktop devices. Video magnifiers enable the user to control the size of the image, making it possible to read or see fine details.

- **Optical Character Recognition (OCR) programs** scan printed documents and read them aloud. OCR technology is available as a computer and scanner software. It can also be installed on a cell phone or used as a "stand alone" device.

- **Screen magnification software** is available with most operating systems in the accessibility options. When these built-in features are not enough, you can purchase additional screen magnification software that will enlarge the text and the mouse pointer.

- **Screen reader programs** speak everything on the screen aloud to you. They are very helpful when enlargement just isn't enough. Screen reader programs allow users to control the computer with the keyboard rather than a mouse, and are beneficial for everyday computer tasks like managing e-mails, surfing the Web and using Microsoft® Office. Users can learn how to control the screen reader software through built-in tutorials, or through specialized lessons offered by assistive technology trainers.

- **Assistive product reviews** can be a useful guide for finding the latest or most useful vision-related technology. To read reviews, take a look at AFB AccessWorld® (www.afb.org/accessworld).

For more information 24/7, visit VisionAware.org

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