



Assistive Devices for the Home

If you were to become impaired or disabled from an accident or illness, how “user-friendly” would your home be? There are many simple, inexpensive devices that can make daily activities easier and safer for the elderly and those who have physical disabilities.

Products for Living and Sleeping Areas

- Playing cards with extra large numbers.
- Holder for playing cards.
- Talking clock. Tells you the time at preset times or at the push of a button.
- Dressing aid. A button hook at one end makes it easy for people with one hand or little finger dexterity to fasten garments. At the other end is a hook to catch a zipper tab and open or close zippers on clothing, luggage, etc.
- Extra long shoe horn for people who can't reach and bend easily. A small notch helps in removing socks.
- Sock aid to help in putting on socks.

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- Games with large, easy-to-grasp shapes of various kinds.
- Rubber grips that slide onto pens and pencils.
- Hi-lighter with a large, rubber comfort grip.
- Lamp converter. Converts regular lamps to touch lamps. This eliminates the need to manipulate small, difficult switches. Simply touch the lamp base to turn it on or off. The converter screws into existing lamps, but will not fit all lamps and lamp frames.
- Calculator with large numbers and buttons.
- Lever handles for door knobs. Can be installed without removing, replacing or modifying conventional knobs. The lever handle makes opening and closing doors easier. Some handles glow in the dark.
- Pneumatic lift cushion. Helps raise one from a sitting to a standing position. The lift cushion is portable and can be used on a variety of chairs (but only those with arms). Can be adjusted for the user's weight.
- Adapter that makes your lights and appliances sound-activated. Turn them off or on by clapping your hands or hitting an object on a hard surface. The adapter plugs into the wall, and the appliance plugs into the adapter.
- Liquid paper correction pen.
- Locator dots. These easily installed reference points can be used on computer keyboards, tape recorders, dashboards, clocks, oven controls, knobs, buttons and typewriters.
- Lightweight magnifier with adjustable cord leaves your hands free for crafts, sewing or other activities.
- Lighted magnifying glass for help in reading fine print.
- Needle threader.
- Pill box with a digital alarm clock which can be set to remind you it is time to take your medicine.
- Scissors with large loops so that the whole hand can be used.
- Telephone with giant push buttons, hearing amplifier, and light that flashes when phone rings. Frequently called or emergency numbers can be programmed to dial with one button.
- Telephone ring alerter. When a phone and lamp are plugged into the device, the lamp will flash with each ring of the phone.
- Television remote control with large buttons easily differentiated by shape.
- Writing guides. Sturdy plastic templates with openings for filling out a standard check or addressing an envelope.

Products for the Kitchen

- Reacher. These are 22 to 30 inches long. Some fold conveniently. Some have suction cups and lock-in-place features. Useful for taking down lightweight items from shelves or picking up items from the floor.
- Portable bread slice holder with non-skid bottom surface and L-shaped, raised edge on top surface. Holds a slice of bread in the corner for easy buttering or cutting.
- Cordless can opener that can be operated with only one hand. It is rechargeable and can be mounted to a wall or under a counter.
- Cups and glasses with large handles.
- Dycem® pad for counter. Dycem® keeps plates or bowls from slipping and makes it possible to use a mixing bowl with one hand.
- Flatware and utensils with extra large handles and movable grip rings.

- Rocking T knife. Pressure is applied from directly above the object to be cut, so less strength and dexterity are needed. Meat and other foods do not shift or move around on the plate. Good for use with one hand.
- Foam tubing to put around tool and utensil handles for easier grasping and holding. It is slip- and water-resistant.
- Jar and bottle opener. Attaches to the bottom of an overhead cabinet. This makes it easy to open bottles and jars with one hand.
- Dycem® jar opener. A nonslip plastic dome easily removes jar and bottle lids.
- Uni-turner knobs can be clamped onto knobs and handles of different shapes, converting them into lever handles.
- Liquid level indicator. Helps the blind determine when a glass, cup or other container is filled. The indicator hangs over the lip of the container with two prongs on the inside and the battery outside. The liquid is then poured into the container. When the liquid reaches the prongs the buzzer sounds and the unit gently vibrates.
- Illuminating tape. Can be used to mark light switches, stairs, doorknobs, etc. For outdoor use, cover the tape with clear plastic.
- Measuring cups and spoons with large, easy-to-grasp handles and large, color-coded numbers on the handles.
- Milk carton holder. The plastic handle slips over a half-gallon milk carton, making it easier to hold and pour.
- Vegetable peeler with a large, round, nonslip handle that nestles comfortably in the palm of your hand.
- Plate with inner lip. Allows the user to place food onto a fork or spoon by sliding it up against the inner lip. Good for poor coordination or for use with one hand.
- Tab grabber. Opens all tab-top cans and removes twist-off caps.
- Timer. Some are as large as 8 inches across, with bold black numerals on a white background to make it easy to read from distances. Large knob to set time. Use for cooking, exercising or any activity you want to time. Can be used on a counter or mounted on a wall.
- Talking microwave. Tells what setting you have selected.

Products for the Bathroom

- Back scrubber. Most are brushes about 22 inches long, angled to reach the back. Some bath brushes are curved to fit over the shoulder and are designed for people who can not lift their arms far.
- Bath safety treads. Rubber strips about 8 x 18 inches reduce the danger of slips and falls in the bathtub or shower.
- Long-handled comb. A 20-inch shaft with plastic coated grip allows people with limited arm and wrist movement to comb their hair.
- Grab bars. Three-level, zigzag grab bars in the shower or tub provide support while standing or when getting in or out. Bars must be mounted securely into studs or walls backed with woodblocking. Zigzag bars help keep wet hands from slipping and provide various gripping heights for children and adults.
- Easy pull hairbrush. Has a hand strap to aid those with limited gripping ability.
- Laundry bag. A mesh, zippered bag holds many small laundry items and makes it easier to transfer them from washer to dryer.
- Magnifying mirror. Can be used on a counter or hung on a wall.
- Scrub brush. Brush holds securely to surface and is ideal for one-handed use in the bath or kitchen.

- Sock clips. Six pairs of clips marked by color and raised dots help keep matching clothes grouped together in the wash or in the closet.
- Toilet paper dispenser. Allows rolls to be changed with one hand.
- Wash mitt. Terry cloth or mesh mitts can be used with liquid or bar soap. Good for shower, bath or washing dishes. Elastic at wrist makes a snug fit. Mitt can be turned inside out for use with the other hand.

Many simple assistive devices can be found at discount department stores or medical supply stores, or in medical catalogs. Your

physician may also have information about sources of these devices in your area. Or, contact a physical therapist or occupational therapist through a home health agency or your local hospital.

The following Web sites have information about devices that can make your home safer and more functional:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/resources.html>

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/ot/cat/index.htm>

<http://okabletech.okstate.edu/>

This fact sheet was adapted from information on the Iowa State University Extension Web site.

Produced by Agricultural Communications, The Texas A&M University System
Extension publications can be found on the Web at: <http://texaserc.tamu.edu>

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Chester P. Fehlis, Deputy Director, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System.

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