



Specialised tools and resources for children with vision impairment in the middle years

Your child may come home from school with some tools or tactile materials that they often use at school to assist their access and participation in learning.

Magnifiers

A handheld magnifier such as a dome magnifier is useful for spot reading or looking at details in pictures, diagrams and tables. A bar magnifier sits on top of a line of print and allows the whole line to be magnified at the same time.



Don't forget that taking a photo with your phone then zooming in on the photo is a quick way of making small details in a picture or small print larger.

Typoscopes or reading guides

A rectangular piece of black cardboard can highlight the section and line of print that your child needs to read. This helps your child to quickly find their place on the page when they need to look away and look back again.

A typoscope or reading guide is a rectangular piece of black cardboard or plastic with a smaller rectangle cut out window to make it clear where to read. This can be moved down the page to assist tracking along the lines of print while reading.

Reading and writing

Dark pens and lead pencils may help your child see their own writing better.

Sections of text can be highlighted or framed with a thick pen of a preferred strong colour to help children know where to focus their attention and make the task more manageable. Buff or pale coloured paper can help with glare.

A slope board brings the learning materials closer to allow your child to sit straighter and reduces fatigue from bending over their learning materials.

Tactile Resources

Wikki Stix are a great resource for quickly creating tactile shapes and simple pictures. They are made from wool that is coated in non-toxic wax and are slightly tacky so can stick to any smooth surface like a table, paper or a baking tray. Flat 2D shapes or 3D models can be made. Wikki stix are available to purchase online if you want extras for more learning and fun. Children with low vision also find the tactile wikki stix helpful for learning and the strong colours provide good contrast against a light background.



Spur wheels (used in sewing) can create a raised line on a piece of light cardboard. If you don't have one of these, try placing a stiff piece of card in an A4 plastic sleeve then drag a ball point pen across the surface to create a raised line. You can draw freestyle or trace around a shape.

A high contrast tactile ruler is useful for children who are blind and for those with low vision.

Make use of tactile markers like raised stickers or balls of blu-tac, to keep place on a page or as a point of reference to go back to.

Keyboarding skills

Learning at home is a great opportunity for your child to practice regularly and improve their keyboarding skills. A high contrast keyboard may be helpful for some children. Ask your child's teacher or Advisory Visiting Teacher – Vision Impairment (AVT–VI) about some apps and keyboards that might be suitable for your child. Free licences for Typeability, a keyboarding program suitable for children who have severe low vision or who are braille users, are available through the Department of Education for children in state schools. Your child's teacher or AVT–VI can help you access one of these.



It's ok to ask for help

Your child's teacher and AVT–VI will have lots of ideas to assist you to help your child learn in different ways at home. Remember also that many routines of daily life provide valuable learning for children with vision impairment when the children get involved.