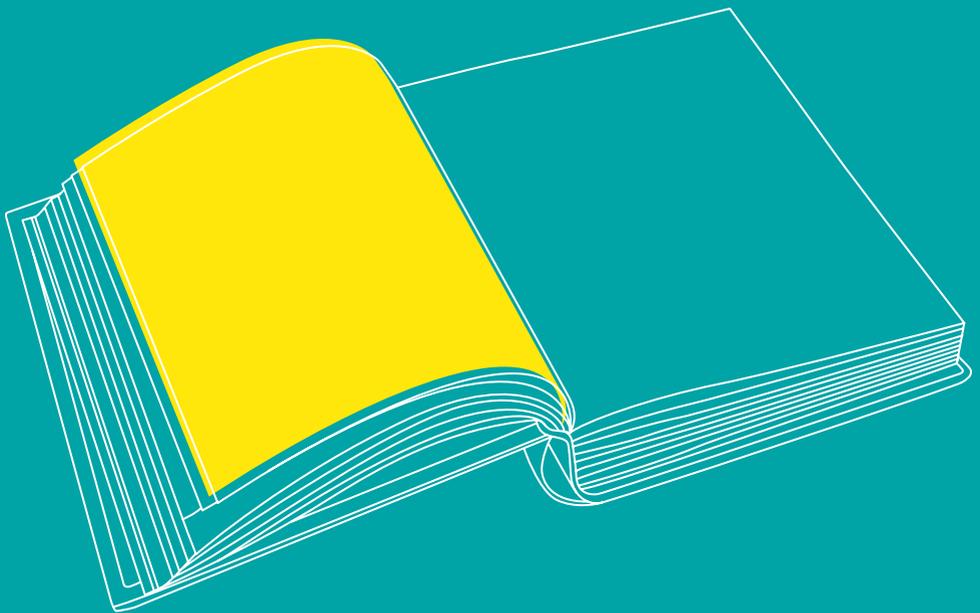


Confident Living

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# Reading



Supporting people  
with sight loss

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# About this guide

If you're struggling to read because of changes to your sight, we've got plenty of helpful solutions. This guide gives an overview of the different ways in which you can read and what is available to you.

We'll explain how to expand your choices, including using magnifiers, and how to make the most of technology. Whether it's reading a book or bank statements, there are plenty of products and services that can assist you.

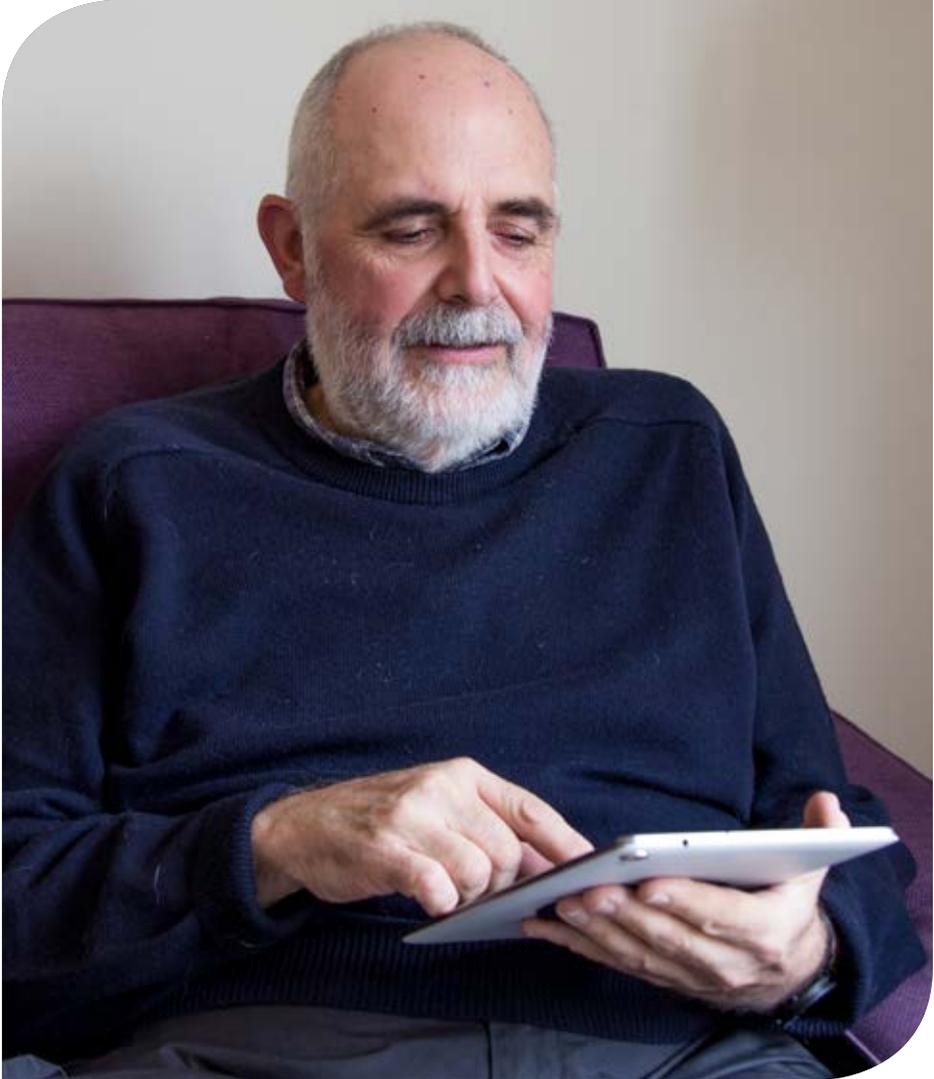
You can also find out more about the reading services we offer, including magazines and the UK's largest library of books, which are available in a range of formats to suit you.

Throughout this guide, we will mention an online directory called the Sightline Directory, which is maintained by RNIB. You can use Sightline to search for useful local or national services for people with sight loss. You can access the Sightline Directory for free at **[sightlinedirectory.org.uk](http://sightlinedirectory.org.uk)**.

**RNIB Helpline**  
**0303 123 9999**  
**[helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)**

# Reading options

There are many different options available to help you continue to read. Whether you're reading text in print or on a screen, there are various options such as magnifiers, lighting, braille, audio and computer software.



The best way to find out what works for you is to try them out – you may find yourself using more than one way to read depending on what you're reading and where. A low vision assessment will also be able to tell you the best way; we will cover this further on in this guide.

## Larger print

If you have some vision but struggle to read regular print, then clear, large or giant print may be for you.

The size of a font is described in point size. Regular print is usually 10 or 12 point. Clear print is size 14. Large print is generally 16 to 18 point size. Giant print is anything larger than this. Your local library is probably the best place to check what size is right for you, and RNIB has a large collection of giant print books (24 point), which are free to borrow.

16 point text size example

20 point text size example

24 point text size example

## Magnifiers

Although organisations should contact you using large print if you've asked for it, there is a limit to the amount of large print that is readily available. Service providers have to make reasonable adjustments to their services to ensure you can access them.

You can use a magnifier to make small text larger, but choosing the right magnifier to enlarge the text is very important. There are many different options such as handheld, desktop or pocket video magnifiers.

Smaller magnifiers, such as handheld and pocket video magnifiers, make it easier to read text whilst out and about, whereas a desktop video magnifier could be useful at home as it has the highest level of magnification, and is handy for large amounts of text.

Our Making the Most of Your Sight guide (part of our Starting Out series), explains the various types of magnifiers, and the tasks for which they're best suited. You should always seek advice from your local low vision service before purchasing a magnifier. Our Everyday Living Products catalogue features a range of magnifiers that can be purchased from our Online Shop. Contact our Helpline for more information, or visit our Online Shop at [shop.rnib.org.uk](http://shop.rnib.org.uk).

**“When you can’t read household bills, newspapers and magazines you just feel eliminated from daily life. I can read things now without any problems using my video magnifier. I was struggling with hand-held magnifiers before, which I found very difficult.”**

**Keith Lakin**

## Know your rights

Service providers such as banks, utility companies, public authorities and private clubs have to make sure that their services are accessible to you without unreasonable difficulty. This may mean providing information in your preferred format of large print, audio or braille. You should always request the format that you need. If you're having difficulty obtaining another format from an organisation or need more information, please visit [rnib.org.uk/equalityact](https://www.rnib.org.uk/equalityact) or call our Helpline.

## Lighting

Depending on your level of sight, using brighter lighting can help to make things easier to see. You should make sure that you have as much light as you feel comfortable with for reading. Take advantage of sunlight or use a task lamp that can be easily adjusted to where you need it most.

Our Everyday Living Products catalogue includes task lights and other lighting products for sale. You can contact our Helpline to order or visit our Online Shop. For hints and tips to help visit [rnib.org.uk/lighting](https://www.rnib.org.uk/lighting).

## Low vision services

Your local area may have a low vision service, which can assess your sight and establish what kind of equipment will be most useful for you. This may include magnifiers, glasses to help with contrast, reading techniques and devices.

You will also receive training to make sure you can use and maintain any equipment correctly and effectively.

Your local social services department or local society for people with sight or sensory loss may also have information, or even run low vision services – you can contact our Helpline or use the Sightline Directory to locate your local society.

## Braille

Braille is a system of raised dots which allows you to read and write by touch. It requires sensitive fingers but many people are surprised at how quickly their sensitivity increases with practice.

Some people learn enough braille to be able to label items at home or work, while others go on to read books. Many organisations also produce personal information for their customers in braille.

Braille can also be produced electronically from some computers, tablet devices or phones by adding a refreshable braille display. Visit **[shop.rnib.org.uk/braille.html](http://shop.rnib.org.uk/braille.html)** for more braille product details. You can also visit **[rniblibrary.com](http://rniblibrary.com)** to see the thousands of braille books that we offer for free through RNIB's Library service. You can join our Library service by calling our Helpline.

## Audio

There is a lot of content available in audio, including many bestselling books, newspapers and magazines. You can also get audio versions of information such as bills, statements or information leaflets.

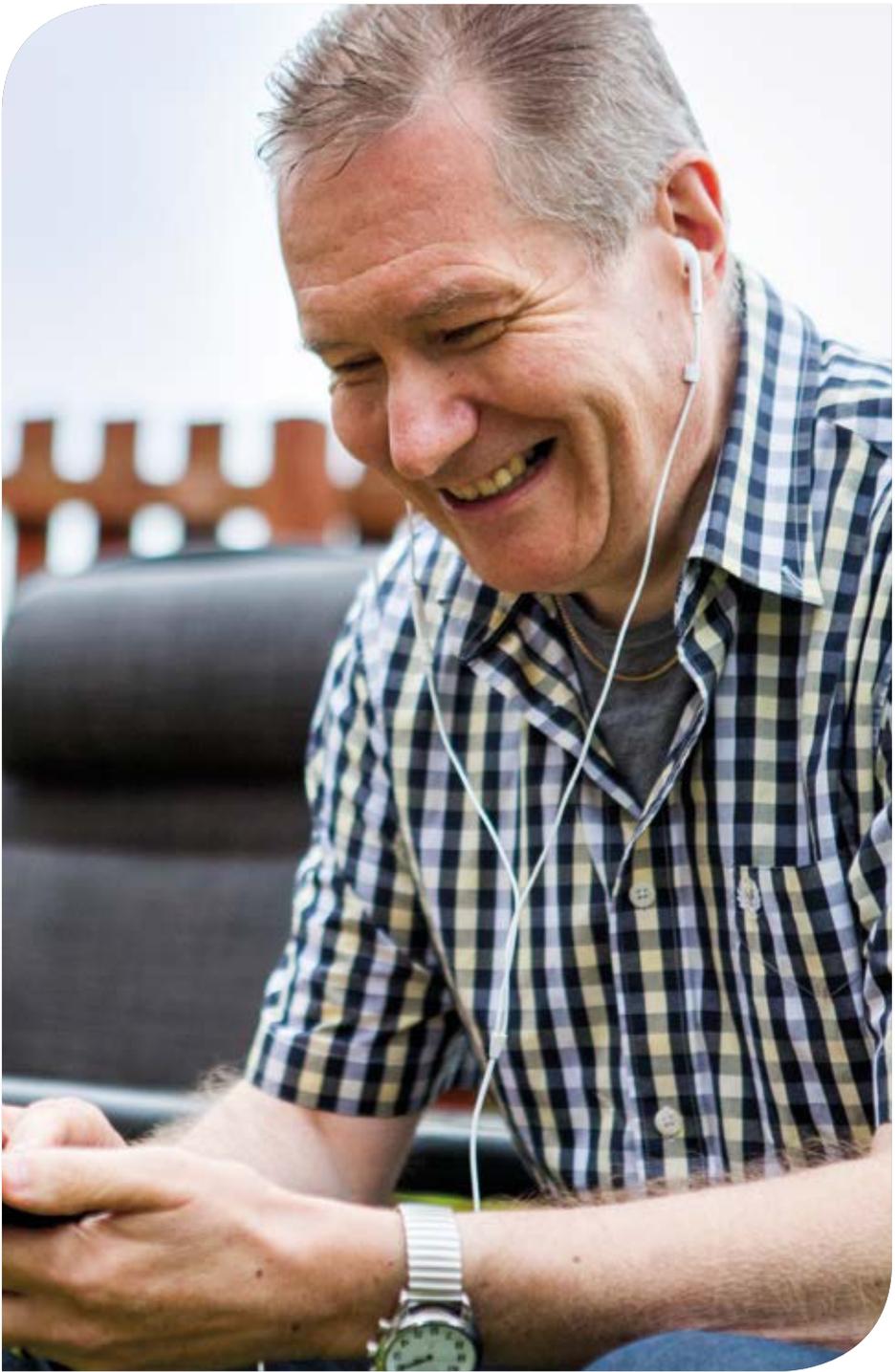
Audio material can either be in a human voice or a synthetic electronic voice. If you're buying an audio book (often called a Talking Book), magazine or newspaper, it is likely to be read by a professional reader or narrator.

## **Audio books and players**

There are many ways to access audio books, such as through your local library, Amazon or our Talking Books service. An audio book player such as a smartphone, tablet or computer will read an audio file of your chosen book or magazine. You can also get audio books in CD or USB stick format.

Audio books which come on a disc are sometimes produced on a DAISY CD. This is a special type of CD which has been designed specifically for audio books and is formatted in such a way that you can easily navigate the chapters of a book, make a bookmark, or stop listening and pick up from where you left off.

Disc formats of audio books which aren't on DAISY CD are usually on MP3 CD instead. These CDs can be played on most CD players, but you won't be able to use the navigation features like on a DAISY CD.



Specialist audio book players are designed for use by people with sight loss, so they often have accessible, tactile interfaces that you can get to grips with quickly.

You can get digital downloads with our Talking Books service by using the RNIB Overdrive app on different devices. Examples include desktop and laptop Windows PCs and Macs, smartphones, android phones or tablets (iPad, Kindle Fire or Samsung Galaxy Tab).

You can download audio books from companies like Amazon, but if you decide to borrow audio books from your local library or from RNIB Overdrive, they will normally be lent for a relatively short period of time – usually two or three weeks. At the end of this time, you will need to return the book. With RNIB Overdrive, the book is automatically returned to us, although you can renew titles if you need them for longer. For information on our Talking Books service or RNIB Overdrive, please call our Helpline.

If you'd like some help making sure you choose the right player for your needs or if you'd like advice on using a player you've already got, you can call our Helpline. We have a factsheet which gives you more information on the different models available. We can also provide technology advice over the phone, or RNIB's Technology Volunteers might be able to visit you at home.

There are plenty of options for you to try; our website [rnib.org.uk/reading](https://www.rnib.org.uk/reading) has more information or you can call our Helpline for details.

## eBook

An eBook is simply an electronic version of a book, newspaper or magazine with the benefit that you have more control over how you read it. With an eBook reader you can greatly enlarge the size of the text and change its shape, colour and contrast. There are also options to connect it to a braille display.

## How do I read an eBook?

To read an eBook you must use either:

- an **eBook reader**. This is a portable device that is designed especially for reading eBooks. Kindle, Kobo and Nook are types of eBook readers.
- an **eBook app**, installed on your tablet, smartphone or computer. These apps are normally free. The makers of eBook readers mentioned above also make eBook apps. Other eBook apps include iBooks, Play Books and Adobe Digital Editions.

eBook readers and apps have additional features such as allowing you to look up words in a dictionary, search for words or phrases, and highlight or annotate text.

## Computers

If you have a computer, you can change how the text is displayed on your screen to best suit your needs. This can mean changing the size or colour of the text or the background by using settings built into your computer's operating system.

You can also download or purchase additional software. Magnifier software, such as ZoomText, lets you magnify the text on the screen and adjust the colour to suit you. If you are unable to see much of the screen, screenreader software is a good choice. The software will read the content to you, using a synthetic voice, or display it on a refreshable braille display.

For more information on computers or technology, you can order a copy of our Technology guide (part of our Confident Living series) from our Helpline.

## Good to know

If you'd like to get help with using technology – from navigating with a smartphone, sending emails on the go and more – RNIB's Technology Volunteers can support you. Come to a local Online Today event to help build your confidence and skills with smartphones, tablets and eReaders.

To find out more, call our Helpline or visit [rnib.org.uk/online-today](https://www.rnib.org.uk/online-today).

# What to read

There are a number of services and libraries that stock large print, audio books and sometimes even braille. Your local library may stock these formats and if not, they can order books from other libraries if required. Visit [www.gov.uk/local-library-services](http://www.gov.uk/local-library-services) to find your local library.

## Reading Choices

Our Reading Choices service offers access to books, newspapers and magazines in a variety of formats.

**RNIB Library** is the largest in the UK for people with sight loss, with digital, audio, braille and giant print books for adults and children. There are also music resources and materials suitable for adult braille learners. It's a free service and you can borrow up to six books at a time. There's also an online library catalogue that you can browse [rniblibrary.com](http://rniblibrary.com).

Our library offers more than 25,000 **Talking Books** on DAISY CD, USB stick or as digital downloads through the RNIB Overdrive app. Our available downloads can be viewed at [rniboverdrive.com](http://rniboverdrive.com) and the RNIB Overdrive app can be downloaded to a smartphone, tablet or

computer. Our Talking Books service is free to join for anyone who is unable to read regular print. To join, visit [rnib.org.uk/talking-books](https://www.rnib.org.uk/talking-books).

**“I think they’re very well read, sound quality is excellent and the choice of books is fantastic. I like how it keeps evolving. The old machine couldn’t even be moved from the table, but since trialling Talking Books on a USB, I now use it all the time. It’s fantastic, I really love it.”**

**Diane Fazackarley**

RNIB Newsagent offers magazines and newspapers in a variety of formats. You can order magazines such as Reader’s Digest, BBC History Magazine, BBC Good Food and New Scientist. Children’s magazines such as BBC Horrible Histories are also available. All newspapers and magazines are available in audio CD, USB, online download, DAISY CD, braille and big print.

## Other library services

### Calibre audio library

Calibre is a nationwide postal library of unabridged recorded books on MP3 CD, USB memory sticks or cassettes. Call **0129 643 2339** or visit **calibre.org.uk**.

### Listening Books

Listening Books provides audio books to stream and download from their website. Members can also receive audio books through the post on MP3 CD. They stock more than 4,500 audio books for adults and children. As well as a large fiction library, they support the National Curriculum from Key Stage 2 to A-level. Call **020 7407 9417** or visit **listening-books.org.uk**.

### Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg offers over 50,000 free eBooks which can be downloaded or read directly online. No fee or registration is required. Visit **gutenberg.org**.

## For younger readers

All the libraries listed provide a wealth of reading material for younger bookworms. There are also some that are specifically focused on children and learners.

## ClearVision

ClearVision is a UK postal lending library of children's books with added braille. The books all have text in both braille and print and include pictures, making them suitable for sight impaired and sighted children and adults to share. Call **020 8789 9575**, email **info@clearvisionproject.org** or visit **clearvisionproject.org**.

## RNIB Bookshare

RNIB Bookshare is a free service providing accessible textbooks and images to support those with sight loss, learning disabilities or physical disabilities and have difficulty reading regular print. Membership is open to education professionals supporting print-disabled learners in the UK. Visit **rnibbookshare.org**.

## Book clubs

RNIB Talk and Support runs telephone book clubs for blind and partially sighted people. You can take part from the comfort of your own home and you don't even have to pay for the telephone call. All you need to do is share your passion for books with the other club members. To join a group, please contact Talk and Support by emailing **talkandsupport@rnib.org.uk** or call **020 7391 2218** or **0845 330 3723**.

# Further information

## RNIB Helpline

We're here for anyone affected by sight loss. Whether you have a technology-related question, or you would like emotional support or practical advice about everyday living, we're here to help. Call **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**.

We're ready to answer your call Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

For the latest information on reading with sight loss, visit our website **rnib.org.uk/reading**.

## RNIB Connect

Join RNIB Connect, a community for everyone affected by sight loss. Membership of this helpful and welcoming community is free, and will give you the chance to meet other people with similar experiences in person, online and by phone. Visit **rnib.org.uk/connect** or call our Helpline.

## Sightline Directory

The online directory to help you find the people, organisations and services you need. Visit **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**.

## Local talking newspapers

The Talking News Federation can give you details of how to get hold of your local audio newspaper. Call **0179 349 7555**, email **enquiries@tnf.org.uk** or visit **tnf.org.uk**.

## Visionary

Find out about your local society for blind and partially sighted people through Visionary. Call **020 8090 9264** or visit **visionary.org.uk**.

## Reading groups

This website lists hundreds of reading groups across the UK – search by county to find one near you. Visit **readinggroups.org**.

## Reading Sight

Reading Sight offers information on all aspects of providing an accessible library service for blind and partially sighted people. Visit **readingsight.org.uk**.





# We value your feedback

You can help us improve this publication by letting us know what you think about it. Please complete and return this form to:

**RNIB CKIT**  
105 Judd Street  
London WC1H 9NE

You can also email us at [ckit@rnib.org.uk](mailto:ckit@rnib.org.uk).

1. Where did you receive your copy of this publication?

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2. Did you find the information easy to read and understand? Please give details of anything you feel could be improved.

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**3. Is there any information you would have found helpful, that was missing?**



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**4. Do you have any other comments about this publication or any aspect of your contact with RNIB?**

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# About the Confident Living series

The Confident Living series is for people who are losing or have recently lost their sight and are trying to build their confidence to continue to lead full and independent lives. Other titles in the series are:

- Leisure
- Managing Your Money
- Shopping
- Technology
- Travel

All these publications are available in audio, print and braille formats. To order please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** (all calls charged at local rate), email **helpline@rnib.org.uk** or visit **shop.rnib.org.uk**.

For a full list of the information sources used in any of these titles please contact **ckit@rnib.org.uk**.

If you or someone you know is living with sight loss, we're here to help.

**RNIB Helpline**  
**0303 123 9999**  
**helpline@rnib.org.uk**

**Ask RNIB** is the simple and easy way to find the answers to your questions online – try it today at **rnib.org.uk/ask**

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**youtube.com/user/rnibuk**

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