

# Taking Care Of Business



## Guide to Employment Lifestyle Workbook

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# Chapter 1: The Employment Lifestyle

Welcome to Employment Lifestyles Training. This workbook will supplement the skills training you receive from your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Teacher. Our goals are to build your confidence and help you gain skills of independence and be gainfully employed.

## 1.1 What is an Employment Lifestyle?

All the things you would normally do during the week when you are employed are part of an employment lifestyle. This includes what you do at home, in the community, and at work.

While employment lifestyles vary, many aspects are the same for everyone, whether blind, visually impaired, or sighted. For a typical work day, there is only so much time to get ready for work in the morning. You have to get dressed, take care of breakfast and family needs, and get things together. How long it takes to get to work depends on how far it is. It also depends on how you get to work—by bus or taxi, on foot, or some other way. Independent travel skills are essential.



At work, most people have to manage time and follow a schedule or routine. They need to be able to use certain tools and equipment. They need to communicate with co-workers. They may have social visits with co-workers during breaks and lunch.

When it is time to go home, how long it takes depends on the transportation used and the route home. There may be side trips on the way home to pick up someone or to get groceries or medicine.

At home, supper and family chores need to be taken care of. After working all day, you may be tired. So it's important to take care of things easily and save time. Morning routines will be less stressful if you prepare for the next day in the evening. This may include laying out clothes, making tomorrow's breakfast or lunch, and taking care of school or family needs.



During the evenings or on weekends, there are often other activities. These may include paying bills, laundry, shopping, and home maintenance. There may be recreation or religious activities, time spent with family and friends, and community or social activities.

## **1.2 Adjustment to Blindness**

If you have never known any competent, independent blind people, blindness may seem like the end of the world. It can be emotionally devastating at first and feelings like fear and insecurity are common. Things you did easily with sight may now seem difficult or impossible to do. Simple things like dialing a phone or identifying money may no longer seem simple.

Making an adjustment to blindness isn't about "giving up or giving in." It's about taking charge. You start by learning new skills to help you face everyday challenges. With training, you can resume the normal activities of work and daily living. A positive attitude toward blindness will help you focus on your abilities instead of limitations. New skills and a positive attitude will help you deal with the emotional issues of blindness.



You have already taken a positive step by applying for VR services. Working with your VR Teacher and using this workbook to learn skills are important parts of adjusting to blindness. The time to take charge and increase your independence is now. As your skills improve, you will gain confidence in your ability to do and be what you want.

## **1.3 Empowerment through Alternative Techniques**

Alternative techniques are ways to do things using non-visual senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing. Some may think that there is no need to learn alternative techniques because they still have some sight. They assume non-visual skills are only used by those who are totally blind. This is not true. People who are fully sighted, as well as those who have low vision, use non-visual skills. Try this quiz.



1. How would you tell if lemonade or tea is sweet enough? Would you look at it or use your non-visual sense of taste?

2. If the milk in a carton looks ok but smells bad, what do you trust? Your sense of sight or your non-visual sense of smell?
3. If a peach looks ripe but is hard when you squeeze it, what do you trust? Your sense of sight or your non-visual sense of touch?
4. If the fire under the skillet doesn't look too high but the food sounds like it is frying too fast, what do you trust? Your sight or your non-visual sense of hearing?

Alternative techniques are a natural part of everyday life. Anytime the sense of touch, taste, smell, or hearing is used to get information or do something, a non-visual technique has been used. Alternative techniques allow people who are blind or visually impaired to be independent. They can live their lives and be successfully employed without depending on their limited vision.

Having sight is no guarantee that a person is capable or has the skills to do a job. However, thousands of Texans who are blind go to work every day in hundreds of different kinds of jobs. They raise families and go about their business just like everyone else. Sight was not the determining factor in their gaining employment. What made the difference was being independent and having the skills and confidence to do the job.

Your VR Teacher will provide training in alternative techniques. The purpose is to build confidence in your other senses. A good carpenter or cook doesn't use just one tool to do their work. Doing the job well requires using several tools at different times and sometimes together. It is the same way with low vision and non-visual techniques. Once learned, non-visual techniques can be used with whatever visual skills there are. This gives a person more choice in how to do things and increases independence. Pilots receive special training to fly by instruments. This lets them fly in heavy fog and at night when they can't see well. In some ways, your other senses are like the pilot's gauges. Learning to develop and use these senses better increases your independence. It increases your chances of reaching your career goal.



There are often simple ways of doing things regardless of how little vision there is. Texans who are blind go to work every day in hundreds of different occupations. With their wages, they pay their bills, raise their

families, have fun, and do things everyone else does. Sometimes the techniques they use are different from those a sighted person uses. Other times they are the same. But the bottom line is they still get the job done and done well.

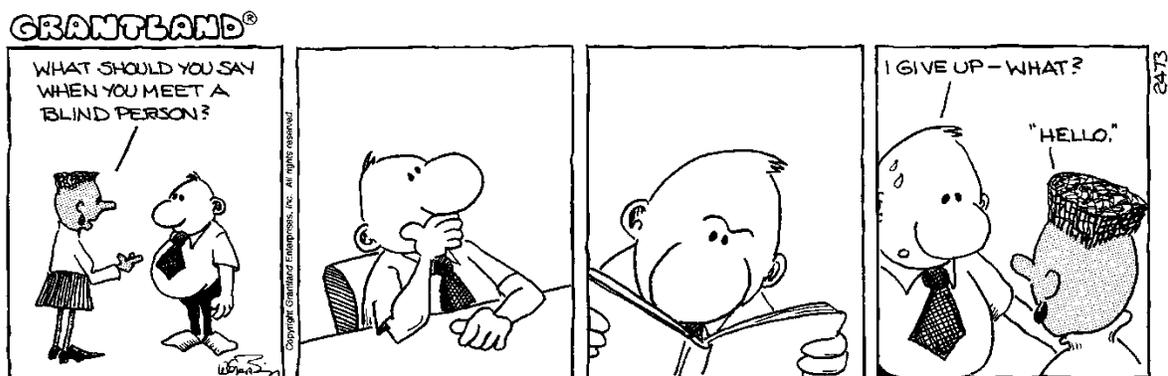
## **1.4 Understanding Your Eye Condition**

Co-workers, friends, and others may have mistaken ideas about why you don't see well. They may wonder why glasses don't help. It is important to be able to explain your eye condition in simple terms to employers and others. To do this you must understand your own eye condition.



It is necessary to have a measurable point to determine when a person's vision seriously interferes with their education and employment. This measurable point is called "legal blindness." Legal blindness is defined as: Visual acuity of 20/200 or less in better eye with best correction or visual field of no greater than 20 degrees in the better eye. "20/200" means a person sees at 20 feet what a person with 20/20 vision sees at 200 feet. The term "blind" used in this workbook is for those who are legally blind as well as those who are totally blind.

If you have some functional vision, you may be referred to an Optometrist called a "Low Vision Specialist." The specialist may prescribe special optical devices that magnify, filter, or increase your usable vision. The specialist needs to be aware of what your employment needs are to make the best recommendations.



## **Low Vision Aids:**

Magnifiers and low vision aids have limitations like any other device or tool. Low vision aids will work for some tasks, but not for others. It is not always possible to control how much lighting, glare, or contrast there is. This will have an effect on how well low vision aids work. At work, a magnifier may help you see a number in a phone book. However, it will be too clumsy to use dialing the phone. At home, a magnifier may help you read the date on the egg carton. However, it will not help for seeing to turn the egg over in the skillet.

**Lighting, Glare, and Contrast:**

Lighting may help for some activities. The type of light used and its placement should be evaluated. You are the best judge of what works. The correct position for a light source when a person is reading should be just above and behind the head or over to one side. The bulb should not be visible from where you are sitting. Glare often means too much light or light coming from the wrong direction. Arrange office furniture so you are not facing windows with a lot of light or use window blinds. Increasing contrast may make some things easier to see. Increase contrast by putting dark objects against a white background. Put light colored objects against a dark background. Black ink is often easier to see on a yellow legal pad than on white paper.

The secret to functioning independently is not to depend just on your vision. Learning alternative techniques and making better use of your other senses will give you more choices. Alternative techniques can work hand in hand with low vision aids to increase your independence.

See Appendix E for information on Low Vision Aids.

## **Chapter 2: Employment Lifestyle Daily Activities**

The techniques mentioned in this guide are only a few of the many ways to do things. Your VR Teacher can provide you with additional techniques, tips, and tricks as needed.

### **2.1 Labeling and Organizing**

Working people are busy, so it is important to make the time count. Organizing saves time because you know just where to go or look for something when it is needed. Labeling saves time because it is easy to quickly identify things. The dials and controls on most equipment, tools, and appliances can be labeled or marked to make them more accessible. Raised tactile marks are the most common ways used to identify settings on dials and controls.

Common items at work (or home) can be used for labeling and marking. This includes things like Scotch tape, sticky notes, felt tip markers, finger nail polish, puff paint, Velcro, safety pins, rubber bands, glue, buttons, paper clips, and garbage bag ties. Commercially available items such as bump dots, Hi-Marks, and Braille labeling materials are available also. Your VR Teacher can provide more information. Items such as index cards, shoe boxes, baskets, binders, and containers of various sizes can be used for organizing.

When first learning Braille, an immediate way to use it is by making Braille labels. Most Braille labels have only a few letters or short words which make them easy to learn and use. The first 10 letters of the alphabet A through J are also the numbers 1 through 10. Before marking or labeling an item, clean the area to be labeled to ensure it sticks. Puff paint or Hi-Marks needs to dry about 12 hours before using. Bump dots can be used immediately.

### **2.2 Personal Management and Appearance**

Organize personal items into one area, location, or container separate from other family members. This makes getting ready for work in the morning go more smoothly.



### **Dress for Success:**

When going to a job interview or participating in a social event, an attractive personal appearance increases your self-esteem and influences the opinions of others. Following are some techniques to help you look your best. Your VR Teacher can help with issues not covered in this guide. Three organizations that provide quality used business attire and accessories at no charge are:

- Dress for Success (for women) [www.dressforsuccess.org](http://www.dressforsuccess.org)
- Attitudes and Attire, (for women) [www.attitudesandattire.org](http://www.attitudesandattire.org)
- Career Gear (for men) [www.careergear.org](http://www.careergear.org)

Check out their Web sites to see if there is an affiliate in your area.

### **Make-Up for Success:**

Make-up is an important part of a woman's appearance when applying for a job or starting a job. When attending a job interview, women should wear make-up that is discrete and appropriate for their attire. You should use only enough make-up to look as simple and natural as possible. Don't go overboard; it will exaggerate your appearance. You may want to go to the cosmetic section of a department store and ask what colors are in style. Employees at department store cosmetic counters can help you match foundation, blush, and eye shadows to your skin color. They also can provide tips on how to apply the make-up, suggestions for different kinds of make-up application, and other make-up tips.

### **Applying Foundation, Blush, Eyeliner, and Eye Shadow:**

Feel and note the shape of the forehead, nose, and cheekbones. Apply a dime size amount of make-up to a sponge; put a dot on your nose, each cheek, chin, and forehead. Starting at your chin, go from the center outward with your sponge. You will gradually work your way up your face always starting from the center and working your way out to your hairline.



way up

Foundation make-up in a tube allows more control than a liquid in a bottle. Storing make-up in the refrigerator may make it easier to apply. Cold make-up spreads more smoothly and easily. The cold make-up on your skin lets you know exactly where it has been applied. Use lotion to remove unwanted mascara on face and hands.

### **Blush:**

Locate your cheekbone by sucking in your cheeks. Locate the part of your cheekbone that protrudes the most. It is right below the center of your eyes. This is approximately where your blush should start. Keep your cheeks sucked in and follow your cheekbone up to the corner of your eye. Locate the space between the corner of your eye and the top of your ear. This is where the blush should end.

Take your blush brush and go once across your blush lightly. Tap your brush on the edge of your container to remove any excess color.

Locate the point where your cheek protrudes the most and start applying your blush. Apply blush gently on your cheek with an upward sweeping motion. Stop the stroke where you find the corner of your eye and top of your ear.

With the sponge that you used for your foundation, chose a corner and lightly go across the area where you just applied the blush. This is to smooth out any lines you may have.

Repeat on other cheek.



### **Eyeliner:**

Start with your upper eyelid. Locate your eyelashes with your fingers and eye pencil. With your index finger on your other hand, gently pull the corner of your eye tight. Find the corner of your eye. Lightly follow your eyelashes with your eye pencil while holding your eyelid tight with your other finger. Repeat for lower lid.

### **Eye Shadow:**

Locate your brow bone in relation to your lid crease or where your eyeball meets your brow bone. Now locate your eyelashes in relation to your lid crease. Now find each corner of your eye. Now that you are familiar with the shape and size of your eye, you can apply your shadow.

Start with the lightest color in your collection. Put color on your brush or wand and tap lightly to remove any excess shadow. Start from the outside corner of your upper eyelashes and sweep upward, going from bottom to top (brow edge). Continue this process until you reach the inside edge of your eye. Repeat steps for the other eye. If you would like to add an additional color, use a medium to dark color for contrast.

You can either apply it to just your eyelid or only in the crease. Apply the second color to the eyelid by starting from the outside corner and sweeping across to the inside corner. To apply the second color to the eyelid crease, use your eyeball as a guide. Follow from the outside of your eye to the inside like a half moon shape. After completing these steps take a sponge and lightly go over your entire eye to blend.

### **Applying Lip Liner and Lipstick:**

Become familiar with the shape of your lips, top and bottom. Trace the shape of your lips lightly with your finger to see the size of each lip (upper and lower). First, make sure your liner is sharp. Starting with your upper lip put your lips together like you are going to make a humming sound: “Hummm,” and make them like a closed smile to make them tight. Now that your lips are pressed together and tight, locate the center of your upper lip (the dip). With your lip liner, draw an x at the center of your lips. Then from either left or right, find the corner of your mouth. Use the finger of your other hand to trace along the outer edge of your lip. Repeat for the other side. Now for the lower lip, find the outside corner (left or right). Use your other finger as a guide and trace along the outer edge of your lip.

### **Lipstick:**

Hold your lips the same way as when applying the lip liner. You may use either a lip brush or the lip color itself. If you are going to use the brush, put a generous amount of lip color on the end. Start from the outer corner of the upper lip, using your other finger as a guide. Repeat the above steps for the lower lip. If you will be using your lip color directly, be sure not to roll it out too far. This helps to not get excess on your lips. Put your lip color on as when applying the liner and follow the above directions. Once you have applied your lip color, blot your lips with a tissue. This helps avoid any excess color getting on your teeth.



### **Applying Powder, Nail Polish, and Other Tips:**

Put a generous amount on your powder brush and tap to remove any excess. Dust lightly all over your face from forehead to chin.

### **Nail Polish:**

Rub a thin covering of Vaseline around the edge of each fingernail of the left hand. Open the polish and wipe any excess polish from the brush. Bring the brush to the thumb of the left hand. Trace to center the brush

on the nail by the cuticle. Then lightly stroke forward along the center of the nail toward the nail tip. Slightly raise the brush and bring it back to the cuticle area immediately. Stroke forward again but slightly to the left of the first center stroke. Repeat this process for the right side of the nail. Three strokes will normally cover the nail.

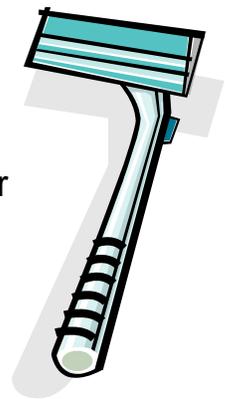
Dried nail polish on your skin can be washed off using regular soap and water by rubbing the skin and cuticles around fingernails. This is even easier to remove if you use one of the clear quick dry coats on top of the polish. The quick dry on your skin adheres to the polish and it peels off when you rub it.

### **Shaving - Safety Razors and Electric Razors:**

Develop a pattern of shaving which will cover all parts of the face without unnecessary retracing by the razor. Use the free hand to maintain a check on the quality of the shave. This helps keep the razor in proper position against the face. Use the free hand also to pull the skin tight in the area being shaved. Pull the skin in the direction which will cause the hair growth to come straight up. Run the razor against the grain of the hair to produce a closer shave. For the bottom of your sideburn, place your finger horizontally at the top, middle, or lower part of the ear as a point of reference.

### **Safety Razor:**

To avoid nicks, put the razor safety bar on the skin and lift the razor handle 30 degrees and begin shaving. Start the blade where the skin is firm and move toward the area of looseness. For example, to shave the upper lip, place the blade near the nose and move it down toward the lip. When shaving the lower lip, start the razor at the upper part of the chin and draw it up toward the lip. A safety razor may cause nicks in loose skin. Draw the skin taut by using the free hand, by positioning the head, or tightening the muscles. Change razor blades often for the smoothest shave. A sharp razor blade does not require pressure on the razor while you shave. Too much pressure on the razor will result in razor burn on your face. If you nick yourself, use a styptic pencil or powder to stop the bleeding.



### **Electric Shaver:**

Hold the cutting surface of the shaver flat against the face. Use short, back-and-forth motions. To shave rough areas, use short orbital or

circular motions. Light pressure will pick up longer hairs and is less irritating to the skin. Heavy pressure will give a closer shave but may irritate tender skin. Pre-shave lotion or powders help the shaver glide across the skin. A slow-running, dull electric shaver gives a poor shave and irritates the skin.

### **2.3 Medications and Toiletries**

- If shampoo and crème rinse bottles are the same shape and size, put a rubber band on one bottle to distinguish it from the other. The same can be done for tubes such as ointments and creams. This technique can be used to identify your tube from someone else's.
- Use a pill organizer. Sort medications or vitamin supplements out beforehand. This saves time in the morning when getting ready for work.
- If you do not yet know Braille, rubber bands can be used to identify medicine containers. Example: 1 rubber band for heart medication, 2 rubber bands for pain medication.
- Large print labels can be made using index cards and a black felt tip pen. Fasten them to items with rubber bands.
- When filling a prescription, have the pharmacist identify it so you can label it right there. A digital recorder can also be used to record any important information about the medication.
- A rubber band around your tube of toothpaste and one around your toothbrush handle will identify it from other family members. To put toothpaste on a toothbrush, squeeze some onto your finger and then scrape it onto the tooth brush. Another technique is to use your own personal tube and squeeze the toothpaste directly in your mouth, then brush.



### **2.4 Clothing – Identification and Care**

Having clothing organized and labeled saves time when getting ready for work or preparing for the next day. Many garments will not need to be marked, as they have identifying features or characteristics.

### **Closet Storage:**

- Organize work clothes in one section and clothes for recreation in another. Put two-piece outfits together on the same hanger. If closet space is a problem, keep seasonal items in the closet and other items packed away.
- Plastic organizer boxes found at hardware and department stores can be used to organize jewelry and accessories.

### **Labeling Clothing:**

- Sew Braille labels on an inside seam to identify colors or special care instructions.
- To match a skirt or pair of pants with a blouse, put one safety pin on the hem of each to know these items match.
- Alter the label found on the back of garments to create an identification system. Example: all blue clothes, labels are cut off. Black clothes, the labels are left intact.
- Different shaped buttons can be sewn into garment seams for garment color identification. Example: square buttons for blue, large buttons for white, triangle buttons for red. Safety pins can also be used (i.e.: one for red, two for blue).

### **Shoes and Socks:**

- Label shoe boxes with Braille or large print labels. Organize shoes according to whether they are for work or other. Shoes that are the same style but different colors can be marked with puff paint or a thumb tack. Place the mark on the bottom sole of the shoe by the heel to identify between the two different pairs.
- Polished shoes give a professional working appearance. To polish shoes, apply polish in sections, using the seams as boundaries. Allow to dry and buff. An applicator with sufficient polish will slide easily across the shoe. A dry applicator will drag. The buffing brush or cloth will feel resistance at first when buffing. It will glide over the area when it is buffed properly.
- Sock tuckers help organize socks. The socks are pulled through the plastic clip when the socks are taken off. This keeps them mated while they are laundered and dried and put back in the sock drawer.



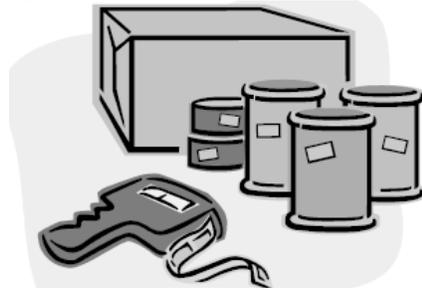
### **Knee Highs:**

- Keep knee highs paired by color as soon as you purchase them. Keep them together with rubber bands or safety pins. Try placing them in baggies and labeling the baggy. Snipping off a bit at the top may help identify color. Sew French knots (1, 2, and 3) as an aid to tell colors apart. Tie a pair in a knot to keep them together.

## **2.5 Meal Preparation and the Employment Lifestyle**

### **Kitchen Organization:**

Having things organized and labeled makes meal preparation faster and easier during the work week. Use different shelves for different things. Strips of cut cardboard boxes can be used as dividers between rows on the same shelf. Organize items of the same type like fruits or soups together, in a row or the same location. Place in the cabinet or pantry. Organize frozen items in the freezer according to meat, vegetables, or dairy.



### **Labeling Food Items:**

- Make removable and reusable Braille or large print labels for items that are used only once and then replaced, like canned goods. Fasten the label with rubber bands.
- Take your labels with you to the grocery store and label the items as they are put in the cart.
- Permanent labels for things like spice containers can be made using self adhesive Braille labels or white tape with large print.

### **Using the Stove Top for Meal Preparation:**

Most stove burner knobs do not need to be marked if you use the clock method. Think of the stove knob like a clock face. Turn the knob to the low, medium, and high settings and see what “time” the dial is pointing to. Example, if the dial points straight down on medium, it is pointing to 6 o’clock. Use the front burners to avoid reaching over hot burners. If there are small children, you may want to use the back burners instead. Position pan handles out of the way so they will not be accidentally bumped.

### **Centering Pans on Gas/Electric Stoves:**

Pans/skillets not centered on the burner will cook unevenly and could be

dangerous. Select a skillet/pan the same size or larger than the burner it will set on. Start with a cold pan and burner. Feel with your hands to check that the pan is centered on the burner and not off to any one side. If the pan or burner is hot, make sure the burner is turned off. Use a wooden spoon to check all four sides to see if it is centered.

### **Centering Pans on Glass Top Stoves:**

On a cold stove, feel the area around the burner to see if there is a slightly different texture. If so, this can aid in centering the pan/skillet. If the top is smooth all over, then determine how far in from the front or the back and the side each burner is. For example, the front left burner may be the width of two fingers in from the side of the stove and from the front of the stove. These distances will vary, since the burners are not all the same size on glass top stoves.

### **Setting the Temperature on the Stove Top:**

Always start with a medium temperature. With a little practice, the temperature can be judged based on a fast or slow frying sound and by the odor of the frying food. To check if a burner is heating, hold your hand about 12" above the burner and slowly lower it. If the burner is heating, you will feel the heat well before touching the burner. This is safer than getting your face down close to the burner to see if it is lit.



### **Turning Items in a Skillet:**

Practice using a cold skillet if you are nervous. When frying meat, turn the heat down before you turn the meat to reduce grease popping. Use a spatula, fork, or tongs to locate items and hold them if needed while turning with another utensil. Lift and flip the item so it falls back into the same place in the skillet and not somewhere else. To check if all pieces have been turned, use a utensil to feel the surface of each piece. The pieces that have not been turned will have a different surface texture. If there is very much oil left in the skillet, some prefer to remove it right away and others prefer to let it sit and cool before removing it.

### **Telling When Food is Done:**

There is always a certain amount of trial and error when determining when something is done. What suits one person may not suit someone else. For best results, always follow recommended recipe, timing, and

cooking directions. Meat usually gets firmer as it cooks, while vegetables will get softer. Use a fork to poke and test the texture. Many items such as bacon and scrambled eggs will change odor as they are cooking, giving you clues to how done they are. The sound of many foods that are being fried will change as the food becomes more cooked. Most recipes recommend cooking items at a certain temperature for a certain length of time. Tactile and talking food thermometers are available.

### **Thumb-finger meat doneness test:**

This test gives a ballpark idea of how done meat is. It takes practice to get the technique down as many people have different ideas about what rare, medium, and done means to them. The accuracy of this technique depends on how much experience you have with the technique and your own sense of touch.

Gently touch the tip of your thumb to the tip of your pointer finger on the left hand without squeezing. With a finger on the right hand, press the pad below the thumb on the left hand. This is what meat feels like when it is rare to medium rare. Now gently touch the tip of the thumb to the middle finger and feel the thumb pad. It is firmer which is about medium. Touch the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger and feel the thumb pad for well done. Using this technique, you can use a utensil to poke meat and judge its doneness.



### **Boiling:**

Measure the amount of water needed before boiling. The sound of escaping steam and the sound and slight vibration of the pan will indicate the water is boiling. Holding the hand about 12" above the pan and feeling the steam can also verify the water is boiling. Pans are available that have a locking lid with holes in the lid. These pans allow you to pour out hot liquid into the sink while keeping the food locked in the pan. Your VR Teacher can provide more information.



### **Using the Oven:**

Round oven dials may need to be marked. Marking the broil setting and the 300, 350 and 400 setting is usually all that is needed. Many will only mark the 350 and 400 settings. Put an additional mark on the stove backboard above the dial at the “Off” location. Set the dial by turning it until the desired dot on the dial lines up with the mark on the stove backboard.

Digital stoves usually have buttons instead of dials. Many (but not all) digital stoves start the temperature at 350 when the oven is started. Check your instruction manual to be certain. The temperature can usually be raised or lowered in 5 degree increments each time the button is pressed. Many stoves will beep each time the temperature button is pressed. Check your instruction manual to be certain.

### **Oven Activity:**

Remove pots and pans and set the oven to the desired temperature. Some people prefer to wear long sleeve oven mitts to protect their hands and upper forearms. Stand to the side of the oven door and open it 4 to 6 inches to let the heat momentarily escape. Then open the door all the way. Pull out the oven rack to the safety stop. Place the food item squarely on the rack and push the rack back into the oven and close the door. When removing the item, stand to the side and open the door partly to let the heat escape before opening the door all the way. Pull the rack out to the safety stop. Remove the baked item and put it in a predetermined place on the counter or table. Push the rack back in, close the oven door, and turn the oven off.

### **Microwave:**

Marking the controls is the only adaptation needed. Most microwaves have digital button controls, although a few still have dials. Some microwave manufacturers have Braille overlays available on request. If you are unfamiliar with using a microwave, anyone who has used one can provide tips and techniques for using it. For safety and general instructions, refer to the owner’s manual. Many accessible microwave recipe books



are available through the Texas State Library Talking Book program.

Mark your microwave with bump dots, Braille labels, or puff paint. Mark only the buttons you use all the time. A common way is to mark the odd number buttons (1, 3, 5, 7, and 9) and the Start/Off buttons.

If you have a microwave with a dial, mark only the numbers you use on a weekly basis. Mark the numbers by putting a small dot of orange puff paint on the dial by the numbers. When dry, the time is set by turning the timer dial until the dial pointer lines up with the desired number. Mark only what you normally use. Too many marks make it difficult to remember them all.



### **George Foreman Grill:**

No special adaptations or techniques are needed for George Foreman Grills. Follow preparation and timing instructions in the owner's manual for grilling meats, vegetables, or sandwiches. Accessible recipe books are available through the Texas State Library Talking Book program.

### **Crock Pots:**

Crock Pots are useful when you want a hot meal waiting when you get home from work. Some Crock Pots have controls or dials and may need to be marked. Accessible Crock Pot recipe books are available through the Texas State Library Talking Book program. Many grocery stores now carry complete, ready-to-cook Crock Pot meals in the freezer section. These can be useful when you come home from work tired.

### **Timing and Measuring:**

Tactual or Braille mechanical timers with long ring mechanisms make timing the cooking process easy. If timing for 15 minutes or less, turn the knob at least half way around and then back to where you want the time to start. Electronic timers are available, but may not always be accessible.



Keeping measuring cups and spoons connected together makes individual identification easy. Some people prefer to keep them separated instead of connected. If the cups need to be marked, a common method is to mark the handles with one or more dots of puff paint or Hi-Marks. Example: Put 3 dots of puff paint on a one-third cup handle, and 4 dots on the handle of a one-fourth cup. The same can be done for measuring spoons. Some people bend the end of a measuring spoon 90 degrees so it resembles a dipper. Dry and liquid ingredients can then be dipped out of a container. Keep flavorings, extracts, and spices in wide mouth containers to make them easy to dip into.



### **Measuring Liquids:**

Hold the measuring cup or spoon by the handle with the thumb or index finger on top of the handle. The tip of the thumb or finger should extend slightly past the handle into the cup area. When the cup is full, the liquid will touch the tip end of the thumb or finger.

### **Using Knives:**

Observe common safety practices when using knives or other sharp instruments. For example, do not put knives in the dishwasher along with other items. Knives normally are washed separately from other utensils. Sharp knives are generally safer than dull ones. If you try to force a dull knife through something, it takes more effort and can slip and cause an injury. Lay a knife down so neither the blade or handle is extending over the edge of the counter or table. If others are in the kitchen, carry the knife with the handle at your side, with the blade pointing toward the floor.

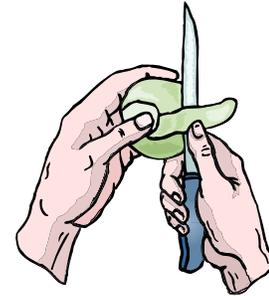


### **Cutting Boards:**

A piece of non-slip shelf liner under the cutting board will keep the cutting board from moving. Some people prefer to put the blade under the cutting board when they are not using the knife.

### **Cutting, Slicing, and Dicing:**

Position the knife at the angle appropriate to the item being cut. The forefinger of the free hand can be used to measure the thickness desired. Place the knife blade on the item with the side of the blade touching the tip of the finger. Keep the knife at the appropriate angle and apply pressure with smooth movement and even tension. Another way to determine thickness is to span the item with thumb and forefinger, keeping out of way of knife blade. Practice cutting slices that are uniform in size. To dice items, cut the item in even strips, turn the strips sideways, and cut at even intervals across the strips.



### **Peeling:**

The part of a fruit or vegetable that is peeled will feel slicker than the part where the peeling is still attached. Wetting the item in some cases will make this more noticeable. Onions peel differently because the onion grows in layers. A quick way to peel an onion is to start by cutting both ends from an onion. Then using the tip of a short knife, make a small cut from the top to the bottom on one side, cutting through one layer. Peel that layer from the onion.

### **Spreading:**

Determine how much spread is on the knife by how heavy it feels. Apply a sufficient amount of spread in the center of your item. Spread from the center to the edges, checking with the fingers for excess or droppings. Others prefer to apply spread to the edges and then spread from the edge to the center. Some prefer to use a spoon for spreading instead of a knife. Peanut butter is good to practice spreading with. Use at room temperature rather than refrigerated.



### **Pouring Liquids:**

Problems with depth perception may make it look like the pouring spout is right over the cup when it is not. This is a common cause for spills. Position the spout of the pouring vessel at the rim of the receptacle before the liquid flows out. Hold the

pouring vessel in one hand and place the spout between the thumb and forefinger of the other hand. Rest the spout on the rim of the receptacle. Pour slowly. If the pouring container is full, adjustment will need to be made in the angle to which it can be tipped.

To determine if the receptacle is getting full, place the index finger over the rim of the receptacle and extend slightly into the receptacle. Notice the difference in the sound of the liquid as it nears the top or note the weight of the receptacle increasing. Practice these techniques with hot and cold tap water. If spills are a concern, pour liquids over a sink or a bowl.

### **Kitchen Safety:**

People who are blind or visually impaired do not have accidents in the kitchen any more often than sighted people. The primary reasons for accidents in the kitchen are carelessness or not following common safety procedures. Discuss any concerns with your VR teacher.

### **Outdoor Barbequing:**

It is common for people to get together after work or on weekends for a barbeque. Your VR Teacher can provide tips and alternative techniques for barbequing with a charcoal or gas grill.

## **2.6 Dining Out, Ordering Food, Locating Items, and Cutting Meat**

Dining out for lunch or supper is a common employment lifestyle activity. However, it is not unusual for people who are newly blind or visually impaired to be concerned about eating in public. Concerns usually include identifying where things are on the table and plate, being messy, and being able to cut meat.

If you have low vision, it is wise to learn alternative eating techniques when eating out. You have little control over lighting, glare, and contrast in public eating and social situations. Your vision may leave you stranded when the lighting situation changes. Alternative techniques work regardless of how much light is present. They can help ensure that you can eat neatly and gracefully in any public situation.

### **Ordering Food:**

- If the waiter or waitress asks someone else what you want, calmly speak up without waiting for the other person to respond. Don't be

shy about this. The wait staff needs to learn to interact directly with you.

- Some restaurants have Braille or large print menus available. However, be aware that they may be old and out of date.
- It is OK to ask a dining companion to read the menu. If you are dining alone, you may wish to ask the wait staff to read the menu.
- If the restaurant advertises online, you may be able to review the menu selections before you go to the restaurant.

### **Locating Items on the Plate:**

Wait staff may sometimes offer to tell you what is on your plate using clock directions. This is usually not necessary since you ordered the food and already know what is on the plate. A fork can be used to identify large things like baked potatoes, small vegetables like corn and peas, and firm things like chops or slices of meat. Mashed potatoes have a slushy feel that cannot be confused with firmer objects. Tasting an item will provide confirmation about what it is.

### **Locating Items on the Table:**

When searching or reaching for something on the table, do not extend your fingers straight out. This increases the chances of accidents or spills. Have the palm facing down and fingers slightly curled down, just touching the table surface. Slowly move your hand forward in a back and forth overlapping motion while you search. Avoid touching the edge of the plate with your arm as you reach to avoid soiling clothes.

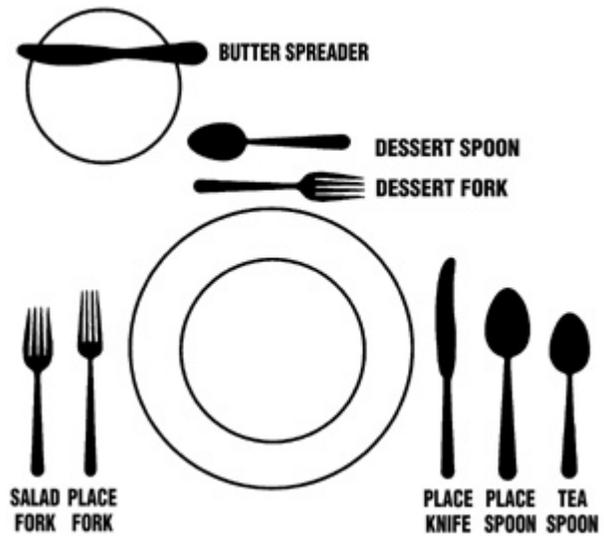


### **Salt and Pepper Shakers:**

The salt shaker will normally be heavier than the pepper shaker, as salt is heavier than pepper. To determine how much salt or pepper is coming out, hold your hand with the fingers spread out above the food item. Shake the salt or pepper over your spread fingers. The salt will hit the back of your fingers and fall on the food, letting you know how much is coming out. Some people prefer to shake the salt or pepper into the palm of one hand. They then take a pinch with the other hand and sprinkle over the food.

### **Place Settings:**

An informal place setting may have a salad and dinner fork to the left of the plate and a knife and spoon on the right of the plate. A formal place setting will have these same pieces. In addition, there may be a teaspoon to the right of the other spoon and a fork or spoon above the plate for desert. There may be a small plate with a butter knife on it above and to the left of the plate.



### **Glasses and Cups:**

Scan along the surface of the table with fingers curled until you locate a glass or cup. The weight and temperature of the glass or cup will indicate if it has something in it.

### **Buttering Bread:**

- Take the butter container in the non-dominant hand, just touching the butter with the edge of the thumb. Use the end of the butter knife in the dominant hand to get the butter, making sure to include the part that was just touched.
- Buttering rolls: Bread is normally broken and buttered bit by bit as it is eaten. Hold the piece of bread in the non-dominant hand and move it so that the edge of the thumb is just touching the butter on your butter plate. Use the end of the butter knife to find and apply the butter to the bread. This technique gives you an idea of how much butter is being applied without measuring it with a finger.

### **Green Salads:**

Salads that have whole onion rings, large leaf pieces, large cherry tomatoes, or tomato wedges can be challenging. Removing them to cut into smaller pieces is an option as is just cutting across the salad several times before eating. Use the weight and balance of the fork to determine how much of a bite you have.

### **Salad Dressings:**

Some people ask for salad dressing on the side to better control how much and where it goes on the salad. Dipping the fork into the dressing and then spearing the salad is another way of eating dressing.

### **Cutting Meat:**

- Cutting meat is not difficult, but takes practice. It is necessary to have an idea of what a bite of appropriate size feels like on a fork or spoon. A person may occasionally bring an empty fork to the lips, but this is nothing to get upset about.
- It may help to turn the plate so the meat is at the 6 o'clock position closest to you. Find an edge or end of the meat. Insert the tines of the fork at a bite-size distance from the edge of the meat. Placing the pointer finger on the back of the knife when cutting may give better control. Lay the knife along the back of the tines so that the fork provides a directional guide for cutting.
- When the cut is complete, the knife is laid across the back of the plate and the fork switched to the dominant hand. Lift the fork slightly to determine the weight of the cut piece. If it feels too large, pick up the knife again. Reposition the fork by holding down the piece of meat with the point of the knife. Release and reposition the fork and make a second cut.
- Practice with something easy to start with such as a hamburger patty or boneless chicken breast. Tough meat, steaks, and chops with bones may present a challenge and require additional practice.



### **Dessert Utensils:**

The dessert fork or spoon is normally centered above and parallel to the dinner plate. Sometimes, the dessert is served with the utensil on the dessert plate.

## **2.7 Domestic Chores**

Working full time doesn't leave a lot of free time for domestic duties. Brainstorm for ways to make your life easier.



### **Vacuuming, Mopping, and Sweeping:**

Divide the room into smaller zones or sections. Use furniture, appliances, office equipment, and walls as reference points. Overlap each zone or section when cleaning. When sweeping, stand still in the middle of a section and place the dustpan between your feet. Reach out with the broom and sweep towards yourself into the dustpan. Do this from left to right until you have swept a half circle around yourself. Turn around, step back, and repeat for the other half circle.

Another method is to lay the dustpan in the middle of a zone. Walk around the edge of the zone and sweep everything toward the dustpan. Then pick up the dustpan, make the pile smaller and sweep into the dustpan. Some prefer to walk barefoot to verify that the floor is clean.

### **Laundry, Stain Identification, Sewing, and Ironing:**

Mark or label the washer and dryer controls for the settings you use most often. Refer to the section on Clothing and Appearance for tips on identifying and labeling clothing and care instructions.



### **Stain Identification:**

Water-based stains often raise the fiber of the fabric making that spot feel rougher than the surrounding area. Grease stains will generally feel greasy or waxy. If you suspect or know a stain has occurred, remember the spot so you can pre-treat it before laundering. A small safety pin can be used to identify the location later. Several manufacturers make stain removal pens and sticks. These can be carried with you and applied to the stain while you are still wearing the clothing.



### **Sewing:**

Keep a small magnet handy to pick up a dropped needle or pin. The VR Teacher can demonstrate special needles and devices to make threading a needle easy for minor mending chores.

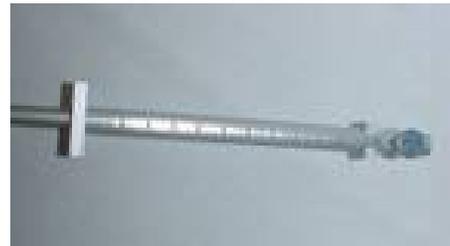
### **Ironing:**

Your VR Teacher can provide tips for filling steam irons, positioning and

locating the iron, and for ironing.

### **Measuring Tips and Techniques:**

Items like yardsticks and rulers are easy to mark with bump dots and puff paint. Wooden yardsticks can be modified by cutting small notches at the inch for the first 6 inches and then a notch at every foot mark. Money can be used to measure small things. Two dimes stacked together are about 1/8th inch in thickness. Four dimes stacked together are about 1/4th inch. A quarter is about one inch wide and a penny is about 3/4ths inches wide. A dollar bill is about six inches long. Commercially made products like embossed rulers and adapted measuring tapes are available. If you know the length of your long white cane, it can be used as a measuring stick to get estimates.



### **Click Rule:**

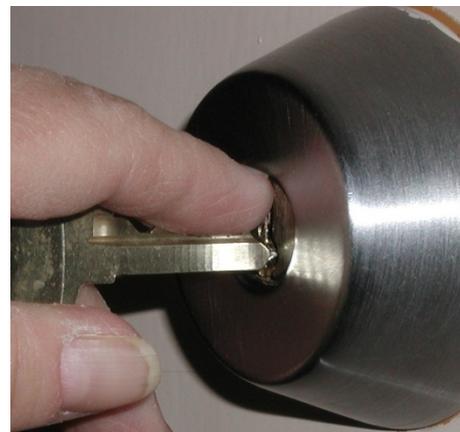
If measuring accuracy is needed, ask your VR Teacher about a Click Rule. Click Rules can be used non-visually and measures accurately down to 1/16th of an inch.



### **Keys and Locks:**

Memorize distinguishing features of keys. If two keys are alike, a small dab of nail polish or puff paint on the head will help tactually identify one from the other. Cutting small notches on the head of a key with a file is another way to mark keys tactually.

Keys normally go into the keyhole with the teeth facing upwards. Find the keyhole with the thumbnail of the opposite hand. Hold the thumbnail in the slot and slide the key along the fingernail and the key will go right in.



One handed method: Place the index finger over the top of the key

teeth so the fingertip extends slightly past the key. Use the fingertip to locate the keyhole and then push the key straight in.

### **Electrical Plugs:**

Turn the appliance off that you will be plugging in. With dry hands, hold the plug with the dominant hand and locate the electrical outlet with the free hand. With the pads of the fingertips (not the nails) on the free hand, locate the outlet slots. Bring the plug up to the outlet, move the free hand away, and guide the plug into the slots. If the plug does not go in, rotate it 180 degrees and try again. The prongs on some plugs are wider on one side than the other.

### **Locating Dropped Objects:**

Listen to where a dropped object lands. Pivot your body and go toward the object, but underestimate the distance. Bend down or get down on your hands and knees. Place your hand in front of your face while bending down as a protective technique. Use your free hand (the one that's not protecting your head) to search—palms down—with a very light sweeping motion. Use “rainbows” or half circle patterns starting near your feet. After you have made a half circle sweep, make the rainbow a little larger and sweep in the opposite direction. Repeat this pattern, making broader “rainbows” with each sweep. Change to a new location a few feet away if you do not find the object. Remember to continue to protect your head.

Another technique is to use your long white cane. Bend down or kneel as above. Lay the cane flat on the ground with the handle near your feet or knees with the tip pointing away from you. Hold the handle so it stays in the same spot. Slowly “sweep” the cane back and forth on the ground. If nothing is found, move forward and repeat the sweeping motion.

### **Mowing the Lawn:**

Many blind people mow their own lawns. The technique used will vary according to personal preferences, type of equipment used, and the size/shape of the lawn. Divide the yard into manageable sections. Items in the yard such as trees, shrubs, or edging materials may help define boundaries. Do a section at a time, overlapping each strip that is mowed. Most lawn and



gardening work needs no special adaptations if one is already familiar with what these activities involve. Touch, sound, memory, special markings, or systems are used here the same as in any other area. Each person should work out their own methods and systems according to personal preference and specific circumstances.

## **2.8 Shopping Strategies**

### **Shopping by Catalog:**

Shopping by catalog using a phone is low-tech, easy, and can save time for working people. There is no reason to give anyone your Social Security number. You should only give a credit card number if making a purchase. Make sure you understand the return policy and any shipping or restocking fees. Know beforehand the details about the item(s) you're ordering. Example: short-sleeved, polo-type shirt, 16-inch neck, to go with tan dress slacks. In some cases, you will need to ask the customer representative for information because the catalog is not accessible. In some cases you may wish to tell the customer service representative that you are blind. An example would be when they are trying to get you to read things in the catalog that are not accessible.



### **Shopping by Internet:**

If your computer is accessible and has Internet access, you can shop online. As with catalog shopping, deal with businesses you know and trust. Only give a credit card number if making a purchase. Make sure you understand the return policy and shipping, restocking fees. Some online services offer a phone number for orders.

### **Shopping in Person:**

Get organized before you go out and shop with an agenda. Some people like to take a friend along for advice, but this is up to you. Magnifiers may be useful to some for looking at prices or products in stores. The customer representative is there to assist you. If you are with a friend, let the friend know you want to deal directly with the customer representative.

Some customer representatives unfamiliar with blindness may interact with your friend about what you need instead of talking directly to you. If

that happens, be gracious, but speak up and take charge of the conversation. The representative needs to learn to interact directly with you. Do not be shy about this. It is your money and your purchase. The next blind person will benefit from your effort.

### **Grocery Shopping - Using a Grocery Shopping Assistant:**

Contact your local grocer to find out if a shopping assistant service is available and how to arrange it. If it is your first trip to the store, shopping assistants can help orient you to the store and where things are located. This will allow you to arrange your future shopping more effectively and efficiently. Arrange your shopping list in product groupings so all the vegetables are together and the fruits are together. Prepare a legible shopping list for the shopping assistant and one for yourself in your preferred media. Always ask to see what the assistant has selected before putting it in the cart. Ask questions to ensure you are getting the brand and size or amount you want. Talking calculators are useful for keeping track of your purchases.

### **Grocery Shopping at Local Convenience Stores:**

It is not convenient to hire a driver or arrange for a shopping assistant for just a few grocery items. If only basic staples are needed, one solution is to shop at a local convenience store on the way home from work. Because these stores are set up to be convenient, the location where items are kept doesn't often change. Most staples such as bread, eggs, bacon, and milk are usually found on the perimeter walls of the store. This makes them easier to find. The selections are small but predictable. People who are blind or visually impaired are often able to shop at these stores without a shopping assistant.

### **Grocery Shopping by Phone:**

Some stores offer a service where they'll fill your advance order for groceries. This option can save money if you pay for transportation and the driver has to wait for you. The store may not always pull the name brands or select the quality you want. Your grocer can give you more details.



Grocery delivery may be an option if you live in a small town without public transportation. The store will likely charge a delivery fee. However, this may still be cheaper and less hassle than arranging and paying for transportation.

## **Chapter 3: Community Transportation and Travel**

Transportation and personal travel skills are critical to employment. The employer has every right to expect you to be dependable and punctual. If you do not have a dependable transportation source, the time to start looking is now, not when you get a job. Large cities have public bus systems, curb-to-curb Para-transit systems, transportation for the elderly, taxis, and trains. In small cities and rural areas, transportation options are more limited. For a list of public transportation listed by county and in some cases by city, go to this Web page:

[www.apta.com/links/state\\_local/tx.cfm](http://www.apta.com/links/state_local/tx.cfm)



Friends, family members, religious, and community organizations may be good resources for information about available area transportation. If there is no reliable transportation where you live, you may need to seriously consider relocating.

### **3.1 Personal Travel Skills**

The importance of good travel skills in the employment lifestyle can't be overstated. Having dependable transportation is important. But it is not enough if you cannot travel independently in the work, community, and home environments. Orientation and Mobility Specialists (O&M) are available to provide training in using public transportation and traveling safely and independently. Training may include using the long white cane and information about dog guides and electronic travel aids. If you are not fully confident in your travel skills, discuss O&M services with your VR Counselor or Teacher.

#### **Using a Cane:**

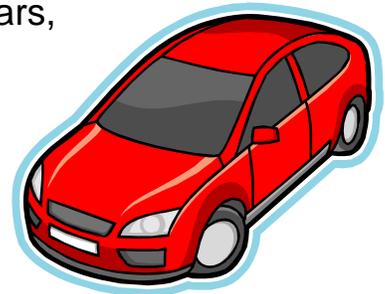
The cane is a symbol of freedom because it allows an individual to travel independently. The purpose of the long white cane is to ensure safe, efficient, and graceful travel. The cane previews areas and alerts the cane user to ramps, curbs, and stairs. It helps identify texture changes such as streets or metal grates in front of escalators. It helps the individual be aware of objects in the path of travel such as a fire hydrant, pole, or store display.

### **Community Issues- Public Restrooms:**

- The long white cane can be used to locate items in restrooms. Examples are towel dispensers, sinks, trash receptacles, and baby changing tables, merchandise dispensing machines, urinals, and stalls. This eliminates, in most cases, the need to search with your hands. The O&M Instructor can provide more information and instruction.
- To check if the lid is up or not on the commode, try these tips. Hold a tissue or a paper towel in your hand. Locate the top of the tank with your hand. Bring your hand down over the front of the tank to see if the lid or seat is up. Many public facilities do not have tanks on the commode. Using a tissue or a paper towel, feel above the commode and towards the back to see if the seat is up.

### **3.2 Hiring and Using Drivers**

- Interview drivers before you hire them. Ensure they are reasonably familiar with the routes you'll be traveling and your area in general. This requires the blind traveler to have a good knowledge of routes.
- Pay attention to the driving behavior of your drivers. Horn blowing or sharp turns may indicate that you will want to hunt for another driver.
- Try recruiting college students. They have time, cars, and a great need for pocket change.
- Pay for drivers vary by location. Expect to pay anywhere from \$7 to \$12 per hour. If you pay at the higher end of this range, you may expect the driver to provide the gas (except on very long trips). Tips are appropriate for good or extra service. A few dollars is a small price to pay for keeping a good driver happy.
- If feasible, you may want to ask local law enforcement personnel about the driving record of the people that you want to hire. You also might want to write down the name of the driver's insurance company. A Criminal Background Check (CBC) costs about \$25.
- Contract agreements usually are not needed for drivers hired for infrequent and personal use. Liability is usually not a topic mentioned by prospective drivers.
- Make your expectations clear. For example, don't make a habit of allowing the driver to run his or her errands on your personal time. Don't make a habit of buying your driver meals or snacks. Make clear to your driver whether you expect driving only or driving plus



assistance (such as assistance in shopping).

- Pay drivers from the time they leave their house to the time they arrive back home. Give drivers adequate lead-time to schedule trips. Stick to the schedules and routes you've stated. Remember that drivers have other commitments, too.
- You may be able to obtain volunteer drivers from churches or civic groups.
- Some drivers may need instruction in how to give useful directions for walking away from the car. Example: "The door to the store is directly to your left," or "Take a line of travel off the front of the car on your side." The position of the sidewalk/door/curb in relation to the car is often the best orientation information available.
- Set boundaries and roles regarding how the driver is to assist you. Determine the degree of personal involvement such as being a shopping assistant or a reader.
- Set your own boundaries to avoid abusing a driver's good will.
- If you have a guide dog, let the driver know what to expect including how to act around the dog. If you use the driver's car, prepare in advance to take care of dog hair and when the dog is wet or has dirty feet.

## **Chapter 4: Employment Lifestyle Communication Techniques**

### **4.1 Telephones, Directory Assistance, and Phone Numbers**

Learning to dial by touch is the most effective technique to learn for dialing a phone. It doesn't take a lot of practice to learn to touch dial. The number keypad on all phones is laid out the same way, making it easy to learn. You will be able to dial business, personal, and cell phones with this method. Instead of straining your eyes, let your fingers do the work.



Some people prefer to put a raised dot on the # 5 key and the 0 key as a reference. The top row across is numbers 123, the second row is 456, and the third row is 789. The 0 is underneath the # 8 key. The asterisk is located under the number 7. The pound sign is located under the number 9.

Place three fingers of your dominant hand on the 456 row so your middle finger is on the # 5 key. Use this home row as your reference point. Practice going from the home row to the numbers above and the numbers below. This method is similar to learning to type. With a little practice, you will be able to dial any phone quickly.

#### **Directory Assistance:**

If you are legally blind, you may be eligible for free directory assistance. Call your phone company to ask for details. You must apply for this service to receive it. Once the phone company approves your application, there is no charge for directory assistance. Free directory assistance must be made from your home phone.

#### **Phone Numbers:**

Phone numbers can be organized many ways. Examples include Braille, large print, 3-ring binders, digital voice recorders, electronic note takers, PDAs, and computers.

### **Reading Mail:**

There are several methods to read printed mail. One way is to use a human reader. Another is to use hand magnifiers or closed circuit TV's (CCTV's). Those with a computer may use a scanner with optical character recognition software. Most people will use a combination of methods.

## **4.2 Signatures, Handwriting, and Note Taking**

Writing guides are available in a variety of formats. They are available for writing letters, signing one's name, filling out checks, and addressing envelopes. Writing guides basically provide a straight line to write on. If you have a signature guide, ask the other person to place it on the document where you are to sign.

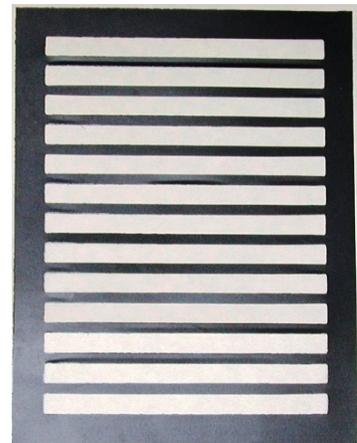


The signature guide can also be used for signing your name on your checks. Place the guide on the lower right hand corner of the check with the thinnest part of the guide at the bottom. The cutout part where you sign your name should be very close to the signature line on the check. Ask the VR Teacher for a signature guide.

Credit or ID cards and signature guides can be used as a handy straight edge for signing your name. In some cases, the paper can be folded where the signature line is making it easy to feel. Small holes can be punched in the paper with a pen at the start and end of a signature line to make the line tactile. If nothing is handy, ask the other person to show you where the line is by placing your finger on the signature line.

### **Letter Writing Guides:**

Commercial letter writing guides are available for writing print letters and notes. Ask your VR Teacher for more information. A homemade writing guide can be made using an unlined tablet and two large rubber bands. Place the rubber bands horizontally around the tablet, about a half inch apart starting at the top. When a line is completed, move the top rubber band about a half inch below the second rubber band for a new writing line. Repeat for each new line. Writing on a yellow



legal pad with a 20/20 pen can increase contrast and reduce glare.

For an emergency note taking technique, roll paper around a pencil into a roll. Slide the roll off the pencil and flatten the roll. This forms a crease on both sides of the roll. Unroll the paper and you now have raised line note paper.

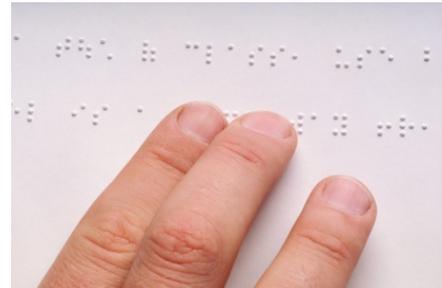
### **4.3 Braille**

#### **Braille is a Tool for Independence and Literacy:**

People who are blind and visually impaired have access to information in many different forms. This includes screen reading and magnification software, magnification aides, and personal data assistants. Statistics, however, show that paper has not gone away over the past 20 years as predicted. Instead, the use of paper has increased dramatically. It is apparent that people still choose to record and retrieve information using paper. For people who are blind, the ability to write down and retrieve information helps a person to remain literate. This is essential in today's employment marketplace.

#### **Braille Equals Print:**

People who are blind are more successful if they use all the options available for communication including Braille, print, and technology. Reading and writing Braille can begin as soon as only a few Braille characters are learned. Labels can be made using only the first letter or two of an item to quickly and easily identify the item. Adhesive plastic labels are available with Braille letters and numbers already embossed on them. You can begin using them even before you learn to write Braille. For the person who uses magnification to read print, Braille is still a useful tool. There will be times when lighting is poor or magnifiers are unavailable.



#### **Direct Relationship Between Braille and Employment:**

90% of the people who are blind and employed are Braille users. As you plan for your employment future, equip yourself with all the tools necessary for achieving your vocational goals. DARS offers Braille instruction to individuals and groups. The Hadley School for the Blind also offers a free correspondence course to learn Braille. For more information, talk to your VR Teacher. Contact the Hadley School for the

Blind at 1-800-526-9909 or visit their Web site: [www.hadley-school.org](http://www.hadley-school.org).

### Learning Braille:

Some mistakenly think that learning Braille is like learning another language. Braille is not a language, but a code which uses raised dots to represent print. Once you have learned the 26 dot patterns for the 26 letters of the alphabet and some punctuation marks, you have learned uncontracted Braille. After learning uncontracted Braille, many want to learn contracted Braille. Contracted Braille is a shorthand form of Braille and can be read faster.

In some ways, Braille is more efficient than print. The letters A - J in Braille are also used for the numbers 1 through 10 when a number sign is used. Learning the 26 letters of the alphabet and a few punctuation marks will enable you to mark, label, and better organize things. With Braille, you will be able to make and read notes, record appointments and phone numbers, and label or mark whatever you need for easy identification. Braille is not as complicated as some people think. The entire uncontracted Braille alphabet including numbers and basic punctuation can all be put on a single 4X6 index card. Your VR Teacher can provide Braille instruction. Braille is not that difficult to learn. For example, learning the 10 Braille letters below puts you more than a third of the way through the uncontracted Braille alphabet!

Braille letters A through J are also used for numbers 1 through 10 (when used with a number sign).

⠁	⠃	⠉	⠇	⠑	⠋	⠒	⠕	⠗	⠎	⠚	
<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>h</b>	<b>i</b>	<b>j</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b># Sign</b>	

### 4.4 Digital Voice Recorders

Digital recorders are used to record and playback voice messages. They are small enough to fit in your pocket and can do things a tape recorder can't. They are useful for community and work activities, travel directions, and job leads. They provide a way to record information, appointments, phone numbers, and interview reminders. Information can easily be recorded on the spot and played back when needed.



Some recorders have multiple folders to store your voice files and can store hundreds of messages. A few give sound or voice prompts when various features are used making the device accessible. Others can be interfaced with a computer. This allows voice, music files, books, and other auditory information to be transferred back and forth from computer to recorder. Your VR Teacher can provide additional information and instructions.

#### **4.5 Budgeting and Finances for an Employment Lifestyle**

Managing your own budget and finances is a normal part of an employment lifestyle. A free accessible course in budgeting and managing money is available from the FDIC called “Money Smart.” Information is available online at

[www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart](http://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart).

If you are not yet working, there is no better time to start working on a budget. Begin by estimating your daily and weekly expenses for meals, clothing, transportation, and other work-related expenses. The estimate probably will not be the same as your actual expenses when you go to work. However, it will give you a ballpark idea of expenses and something to prepare for.



Make a notebook with a list of billing addresses and phone numbers. Include your monthly bills and credit cards, when they are due, and the payment amount if known. If you are unable to read a bill, call customer service. Inquire about the amount and due date. Maintain a check registry and keep your checkbook balanced. Braille is a useful for doing this. Your VR Teacher can provide more information.

### **Paying Bills:**

Contact your bank and utility company and request that your monthly statements be provided in Braille, large print, or online. Organize your mail and bills into categories. This will make things easier to locate for you or your reader.

### **Check Writing:**

- Check writing guides can be purchased from specialty catalogs.
- The Customer Service Department of your bank can provide information about large print and tactile checks.
- Checkbooks with large check stubs are best for Braille entries. Stubs should contain the check number, item, amount, date, and balance.
- Magnification or CCTV's may be useful for some to write checks.
- Use black ink pens to write checks. This makes it difficult for thieves to "wash" checks without alterations being noticed.
- Shred checks when you dispose of them. This helps prevent access to your account and routing numbers.

### **Debit and Credit Cards:**

- Use a credit card carrier with plastic sleeves and mark each sleeve. You may want to arrange the cards alphabetically such as Discover, MasterCard, and Sears.
- Put Braille labels on the back of the card in the lower left corner or cut small notches into the end or bottom of the card. Do not put labels over the magnetic strip or any embossed areas.
- The front of the card is easy to identify. It is embossed and the back side is not. The top of the front side is not embossed. This is where the magnetic strip is on the back of the card. This makes it easy to identify the strip when swiping the card.
- A credit or debit card can be used like a signature guide. Have the clerk put the card under the signature line and sign on top.
- If your debit card can be used as a credit card, a signature can be used instead of a PIN number. Never give your PIN number to others.



### **Telephone Banking:**

Many large banks have automated telephone systems. These usually allow customers to obtain bank balances, retrieve transaction histories,

and transfer funds between different accounts. These systems provide much of the information found on a printed bank statement. Some automated systems are more user friendly than others. You may want to check this feature out if you are changing banks. It is also useful to check to see when live telephone bankers are available.

### **Electronic Banking:**

Most banks offer online banking for free. You can access these services from your computer. Services may include:

- Downloading your account information to financial software on your computer;
- Direct debit services for utilities, mortgage companies, and bank loans; and
- Online bill paying, which is deducted from your checking account.

### **Financial Software:**

Many financial software programs let you write and print paper checks from your computer. They provide an electronic way to manage a budget and checking account. Not all financial software is accessible. If you use a screen reader or screen magnification program, check to see if there is an online users group for that software. They can often provide information about what programs work.

### **Automated Teller Machines (ATM's):**

Most talking ATM's in the U.S. are the result of advocacy efforts by the blind community. The first talking ATM was put in service in the U.S. in 1999. As of February 2003, there were more than 7,000 talking ATM's in service with many more scheduled. Talking ATM's deliver information privately through a standard headset with a mini-jack.

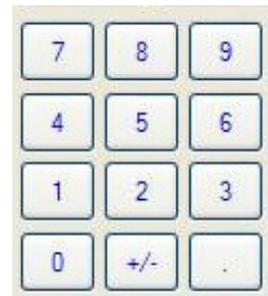
Talking ATM's usually have a standard telephone keypad with an extra column of function keys on the right. The function keys typically have raised tactile symbols and/or Braille labels. They are used to correct, cancel, and confirm transactions. The machines have an audio orientation to assist inexperienced users. The audio orientation includes information about component location, keypad layout, and machine activation. It provides details such as whether a decimal point must be entered and how to repeat instructions.



Many large banks have talking ATM's for their blind customers. Some mid-sized banks are beginning to offer talking ATM's as well. Ask the bank or check on its Web site to find out if it has a talking ATM program. Many banks which offer talking ATM's clearly identify location information on their Internet home pages. Others offer location information on their ATM locator pages. If there are ATM locations near where you live, work, or shop but not talking ATM locations, contact the bank. Share your desire for access at these locations and how important it is to you. Banks say they rarely hear from their blind customers.

### **Using a Talking Calculator:**

Talking calculators make it easy to do your budget, pay bills, and reconcile your checkbook. The number pad on a calculator is similar to a telephone keypad, except the numbers are reversed. A calculator keypad is laid out with 789 at the top, 456 in the middle, and 123 below that. 456 is still the middle home row, just like it is on the telephone keypad. The zero is usually under the number 1. The decimal sign is located under the number 2 or 3.



### **Identifying Coins and Paper Money:**

Identifying quarters, nickels, dimes, and pennies by touch is easy. If it has ridges on the outside edge, it is either a dime or a quarter. If the outside edge is smooth, it is a nickel or penny. Use your fingernail if you have difficulty feeling the edges. Dimes are easy to tell from quarters and pennies from nickels by their size.

The half dollar is larger than a quarter and has ridges on the edges. The new dollar coins are bigger than a quarter and heavier. The edge is incised with letters. This makes it feel like a cross between a smooth edge and an edge with ridges.



### **Identifying Paper Money:**

There are simple ways to organize and identify paper money. Leave \$1 bills unfolded. Fold \$5 bills in half



lengthwise. Fold \$10 bills in half by width. Fold \$20 bills in half lengthwise, then in half by width. Fold \$50 bills in half lengthwise and then in half again.

When you are given change back such as a \$5 bill and two \$1 bills, ask if the \$5 bill is on the top or bottom. You can then organize your change. Talking money identifiers may be useful if you are in business.

## **4.6 Planning, Scheduling, and Time Management**

### **Planning and Scheduling:**

An employment lifestyle is dependent on good planning and scheduling. There is only so much time to get things done when you are working. If you are not currently on a work schedule, you should set yourself up on one. Think of your rehabilitation plan and teacher training as a full time job. We take training seriously. As part of your training, your VR Teacher will give you assignments to complete between teacher contacts.

Plan and organize a work week as if you had a full time job. Determine when you need to get up in the morning to get ready. Decide if you will be eating out at work or preparing and carrying your lunch. Determine when you will return home and what duties you will be doing. Try to do these activities on the schedule you created. If some tasks take longer than you would like, additional training may be needed. Discuss this with your VR Teacher.

### **Watches and Clocks:**

Managing time is a critical part of an employment lifestyle. Clocks, watches, and alarm clocks are available in low vision, talking, and tactile versions. Low vision watches are dependent on how well you see, how big the dial face is, and how much light is available. Talking watches and clocks tell the time when you press a button. These watches are usually not waterproof.

People with hearing problems may have trouble hearing them. In some situations, such as at meetings, they can disturb others when they talk. Tactile watches and clocks are read by touch. They do not make any sound nor disturb others around you.



### **Keeping a Calendar:**

Most working people keep a calendar at home and at work. Calendars help to set schedules and make and keep appointments and deadlines. Braille and low vision calendars can be made or purchased through specialty catalogs. Some electronic devices have built-in electronic calendars. These include computers, personal digital assistants, electronic note takers, and smart phones. Create a calendar for your weekly and monthly activities and appointments. Your VR Teacher can provide assistance as needed.



## **4.7 Hiring and Using Readers**

### **Maintain a Business Relationship**

- It is important to establish that it is a business relationship and not a favor.
- Set clear expectations about what is expected from both you and them.
- You determine when, where, how fast, how long, and what is read.
- Don't be hesitant to let a reader go if they are not working out.
- Hiring and using readers is a professional business relationship. You should not use or abuse the generosity of others or take them for granted. Compliments, small gifts, or tips can be used when appropriate.
- Set a schedule for receiving the recordings to avoid last minute issues.
- Be prepared with all your materials before the reader arrives.
- Decide with the reader on a policy when you or they cancel at short notice.

### **Finding and Training Readers**

- For college readers, advertise on the bulletin boards of campus dormitories.
- Try to have at least 6 to 7 student readers at any given time. Students have exams and may not always be available as needed. Having several readers increases your chances during exam time and school breaks.
- For work or personal needs, advertise in the classified section of the newspaper.
- Tell the reader what type of things you want read. Give them something to read as a test. Provide feedback and note their reaction to your feedback.

- Problems with the recording quality may be due to several things. Recording late at night when they are tired can produce poor recordings. Using poor quality recording equipment can be another problem. Background noise and not speaking directly into the microphone also affect quality.
- New readers may have a tendency to tell the blind person what needs to be read or is of interest. Unless the reader is a tutor, the blind person should always make the decision about what and how much is read.

### **Using Volunteers**

- Find what compels them to volunteer and align your needs with theirs.
- Compliments, small gifts, or tips can be used when appropriate.

### **Using Readers for College and School**

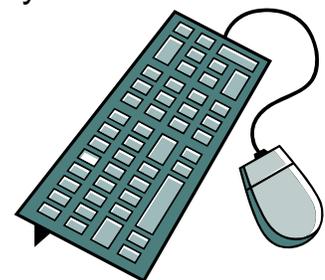
- It is your responsibility to get the books you need on time for class.
- You should take notes while in class, even if recording the lecture.
- Most readers can read continually for an hour or so. Few can go more than two hours at a sitting if the reading is continual.
- Train the reader how you want the material read and in what order.
- If you need a tutor, it is best to have a separate tutor and reader.
- Schedule readers so you will be able to get your assignments done on time. This may mean choosing readers with flexible schedules.

### **Using a Reader as a Note Taker**

- It is always best to take your own notes rather than using note takers. Relying on others to take notes may solve an immediate need. However, in the long term, it does not equip you for the world of work.
- It is acceptable to ask others to take notes if you are absent from a meeting.
- Asking others to take notes while you are present may cause them to see you as someone who cannot work independently.

## **4.8 Keyboarding and Computer Skills**

Keyboarding and computer skills are needed for most types of work. For the person who is blind or visually impaired, it offers an efficient way to both read and write print. It is considered as important as being able to print and handwrite in the world of work. Keyboarding and computers are now taught as early as the second grade in elementary school.



Keyboard skills are normally taught non-visually. Learning to touch type is more effective than the hunt and peck method. With practice, your fingers learn where to go without looking. It is not hard to learn to keyboard if you are willing to practice. All DARS offices have a resource computer for consumer use. These computers are accessible and have both screen reader and screen magnification programs. Most have talking typing software installed. You can use these computers to learn or brush up on your keyboarding skills. Your VR Teacher can provide more information.

Your VR Counselor may refer you for a computer skills evaluation. This may depend on the type of work you are seeking and the computer skills needed. Software is available that can enlarge the image or speak out loud what is on a computer screen. Basic skill in knowing how to do word processing, email, and Internet searches are important. Skills using other computer programs are often needed as well.

#### **4.9 Assistive Technology**

Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of people with disabilities. It can be something as simple as marking a dial with raised dots. It can be high-tech like a screen reader computer program. Appendix I lists Assistive Technology Web sites.

#### **Talking Typing Tutorials:**

Commercial low-cost software is available that speaks the keys and words as you type. Hadley School for the Blind offers a free typing course for anyone who is legally blind. The Hadley course is available in different formats. Your VR Teacher can provide more information.

#### **Accessible Computers for Consumer Use:**

All Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Blind Services offices have a resource computer for consumer use. These computers are blind accessible and have both screen reader and screen magnification programs. Most have talking typing software installed. You can use this software to learn or brush up on your keyboarding skills. Your VR Teacher can provide more information.

### **Screen Reader Software:**

Screen reader software converts the text on the computer monitor into speech. This allows a person to hear what is shown on the screen. There are a variety of commercial programs available. Examples are JAWS, Window Eyes, and Super Nova. These programs can be expensive, and not all computers work with them.

Some Windows and Apple computers have free built-in versions of speech output. These free programs have limited capabilities. There are also free and low-cost versions with limited capabilities available over the Internet. They can be found by doing a Google search. Search for “Free Screen Reader Programs” or “Free Text to Speech Programs.”

### **Refreshable Braille Display:**

A refreshable Braille display is hardware that provides Braille output from your computer. Refreshable means the Braille changes according to whatever you are reading on the screen. These devices require that a person have good Braille skills. They are not useful for teaching beginning Braille.



### **Screen Magnification Software:**

Screen magnification software magnifies the information on the computer screen. When magnification is increased, less information is displayed on the screen. With high magnification, only a few words can be displayed at a time. There is a variety of commercial programs available. Examples include Zoom Text, Big Shot, Magic, and Super Nova.

These programs can be expensive. Not all computers can use these programs. Some Windows and Apple computers have free built-in versions of screen magnification. These free programs have limited capabilities. There are also free and low-cost versions with limited capabilities available over the Internet. They can be found by doing a Google search for “Free Screen Magnification Programs.”

### **Electronic Note Takers:**

Electronic note takers are used by both low vision and blind users to take notes. They usually have either a standard keyboard or a Braille keyboard. Users are able to write, review, edit, and store information using speech or refreshable Braille. Some note takers offer email and Internet capabilities.

### **Video Magnifiers (Closed Circuit Televisions/CCTV's):**

CCTV's help individuals with low vision read business correspondence and other printed material. CCTV's may be stand alone with a monitor and stand combined. Some CCTV's are portable and can be used with your regular television screen. Others may come with a small, lightweight, portable screen.

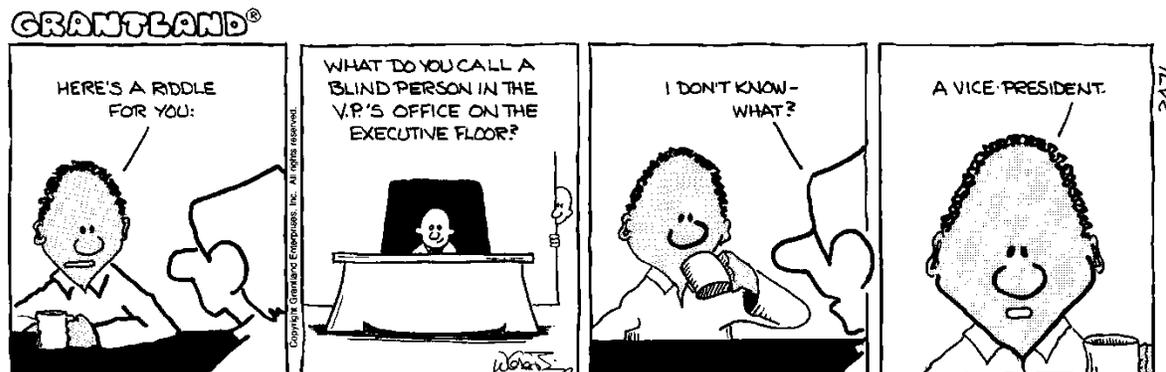
### **Reading Machines/Software:**

Blind and low vision users can read printed text with a reading machine or reading machine software. There are machines for non-computer users as well as computer users. They use a scanner, optical character recognition (OCR) software, a computer, and a screen reader program to convert and read text. They can't read handwriting or script and have difficulty with some printed material.

### **Windows Hot Keys**

Hotkeys are keyboard shortcuts for doing things on the computer that otherwise require a mouse. In many instances, hotkeys let you do things faster than using a mouse. See Appendix H for a list of common hotkeys.

## Chapter 5: Employment Lifestyle Career Building



### 5.1 The VR Team

Your VR Counselor is the case manager and manages all aspects of your case. He or she ensures that you have the VR services you need. We take a team approach to providing VR services. Other members of the VR team include the Employment Assistance Specialists (EAS), the VR Teacher, and the Rehabilitation Assistant (RA).

The VR Teacher is working with you because the VR Counselor requested it. The VR Teacher provides employment lifestyles training services. These services are designed to build your skills and confidence. The VR Teacher meets regularly with the VR Counselor to discuss your training progress.

### 5.2 Hard and Soft Employment Skills – Keys to Success

Hard and soft employment skills are a critical part of obtaining and maintaining employment. Hard skills will help you get an interview. Soft skills will help you do well in the interview and get the job.

Hard skills are used to weed out applicants who are not qualified. Hard skills are skills that are specific and can be taught. Examples: using a computer, cooking in a restaurant, running farm equipment, or reading a cardiac monitor. Hard skills are the minimum skills necessary to do a job. Most people with similar education, training, and experience will have similar hard skills.

When several job applicants have similar hard skills, employers use soft skills to make hiring decisions. Job seekers gain an advantage over

other candidates by understanding their own soft skills. They are able to illustrate these skills to interviewers and potential employers.

Soft skills tend to be a function of your personality. Soft skills include:

- working well with others;
- having leadership capabilities;
- being creative;
- being ambitious and accountable;
- having good communication skills; and
- being reliable.

Soft skills are often part of your personality. But like other skills, they can be identified and strengthened. Review the following questions and identify your strengths and any skills or areas you may need to work on.



### **1. Initiative:**

- Are you able to assume new and challenging work assignments with confidence?
- Do you take action to achieve tasks beyond what is required?
- Do you willingly improve your knowledge and skill level about your job?
- Are you willing to expend extra time and effort to ensure a job is well done?
- Do you know how and when, to ask job-related questions and who can answer them?
- Employer expectations are not always spelled out as they are part of the work culture. Do you know what the expectations are for your position?

### **2. Planning and Organizational Skills:**

- Are you able to identify and coordinate resources that are appropriate to the task at hand?
- Do you manage projects and tasks in an effective, accountable, and responsible manner?
- Do you participate actively in group settings?
- Do you consider all relevant factors when planning activities?
- Have you mastered alternative techniques?

### **3. Flexibility and Adaptability:**

- Can you effectively manage multiple tasks?
- Can you easily respond to changing work conditions and situations?
- Do you accept constructive criticism and suggestions? Do you use them to improve performance?
- Can you deal effectively with anger, frustration, and disappointment?
- Can you easily change your approach to an individual task, situation, problem, or person?
- Can you effectively cope with the stereotypic attitudes about blindness?
- How do you handle misunderstandings that sighted people have about people who are blind?

### **4. Communication Skills:**

- Do you have effective reading and writing communication skills using Braille or other alternative techniques?
- Can you interact with people in all positions in a positive manner?
- Are your verbal communication skills clear, concise, and effective?
- Do you communicate effectively with the sighted public?
- Do you build constructive and effective relationships with co-workers?

### **5. Professionalism:**

- Do you take responsibility for your own behaviors and not expect special treatment because you are visually impaired or blind?
- Do you pull your fair share of the work?
- Do you display professional attitudes, actions, and attire equal to sighted co-workers?
- Do you attend training classes and activities regularly and keep appointments?
- Do you promote and demonstrate appropriate respect for cultural and disability diversity among co-workers and work-related activities?
- Do you know how to ask for a raise or apply for a promotion?

### **6. Decision Making:**

- Do you consistently identify and consider all feasible alternatives before making a decision?
- Can you make decisions on limited but adequate information?
- Do you take a proactive, self-directed approach to identifying needs and solving problems?

- Can you easily make decisions to use alternative techniques if sighted techniques are not working?
- Can you make effective use of past experience as well as new learning?

### **7. Accountability:**

- Do you take responsibility for your actions and the outcome of those actions?
- Do you honor obligations, expectations, and requirements?
- Do you recognize and take ownership of supervisory feedback?
- Can you examine your own knowledge, skills, and abilities and learn from experiences and feedback?
- Do you take action to implement new solutions, rather than wait on someone to do it for you?
- Punctuality and attendance guidelines apply to everyone. Do you know who to contact if you are sick or running late?

### **5.3 Transferable Skills:**

A transferable skill is a “portable skill” that you take with you. Transferable skills consist of both hard and soft skills. Hard skills such as being able to type or use a computer are easy to identify. Soft skills like communicating well can be more of a challenge to identify.

Transferable skills can be divided into three main areas:

- Working with people
- Working with things
- Working with information and data

Working with people involves skills like:

- communicating, selling, training, teaching, supervising, organizing, soliciting, motivating, mediating, advising, delegating, entertaining, representing, negotiating, and translating.

Working with things involves skills like:

- repairing, assembling parts, designing, operating machinery, maintaining equipment, constructing, building, sketching, using computer software, keyboarding, drafting, surveying, and troubleshooting.

Working with data/information involves skills like:

- calculating, developing databases, working with spreadsheets, accounting, writing, researching, computing, testing, filing, sorting, editing, gathering data, analyzing, and budgeting.

There is a checklist in Appendix A, which has more transferable skills. Your VR Counselor or VR Teacher can assist in helping you identify them.

### **Putting Your Transferable Skills on a Resume or Ability Statement:**

State your transferable skill in terms of what you actually did. Avoid saying that you learned or gained experience. The employer is more interested in what you did with what you learned.

- Example: At Acme Construction, I helped manage and direct a work crew. Not, “At Acme Construction, I gained experience in managing and directing a work crew.”
- Example: “At ABC Sales, I developed and coordinated the marketing of sales events.” Not, “At ABC Sales, I learned how to market sales events.”

Be prepared to demonstrate your skills and show examples of your work. Your VR Counselor and VR Teacher can provide guidance if needed. During the interview, emphasize only those skills that would be of interest to that employer. Transferable skills are like a foundation. As your career develops, you will add additional skills. Start making your list of skills and you’ll discover that you have more to offer than you realized!

### **5.4 Developing an Ability Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prevents employers from asking certain questions about disabilities. Most employers will not know how people who are blind or visually impaired do things. It may be up to you to provide that information.

If you have researched the job, you will know what the job needs are. Then you can describe your strategies for meeting the employer’s needs. This approach shows that you are a competent, motivated, qualified job applicant with the ability to plan ahead and solve problems.

One strategy is to anticipate what questions the employer might want to ask about your vision or capabilities, but are unable to. An ability statement focuses on your abilities to do the job using your skills and alternative techniques. It is good practice to write out and practice answering anticipated questions. You do not give the written list to an employer. The list is a tool to help you prepare for the interview.

### **Ability Statement Activity:**

Look at the list below and write out your response to each item. Practice answering the questions with another person as though you were interviewing. Your VR Counselor or VR Teacher can help. The following questions reflect information the employer may want to ask, but cannot.



- Give a brief description of your vision (not in medical terms) so that a person unfamiliar with your visual condition will have a better understanding about it.
- How will you travel to work? Will you walk, use public transportation, or go with a co-worker, family member, or friend? It is important to have options.
- How will you get around at work? Will you use a cane or guide dog? Will you need an initial orientation to the worksite?
- How will you access written information? Will you use a human reader, a CCTV, scanner, or magnifier? What is functional and realistic when it comes to shared documents such as work schedules, safety regulations, job duties, and training materials?
- How will you access information on a computer?
- How will you produce written documents and correspondence such as memos, messages, reports, and purchase orders?
- How will you keep records for yourself? (Braille, hand written, note taking device, other.)
- How will you perform the essential duties of the job? You must know what the essential duties are to answer this.

See Appendix A: Transferable Skills, Abilities, Strengths Checklist for a list of ideas to develop your ability statement

## **5.5 Creating a Disclosure Statement**

Should I disclose I am blind or visually impaired when applying for a job? There is no single answer that fits everyone. This is an important question and should be discussed with your VR Counselor and VR Teacher. In the end, it will be your decision and will depend on your circumstances. The ADA does not require that you disclose a disability prior to accepting a job. To help you make an informed decision, the following is provided as “food for thought.”

**1. If I tell someone about my disability in advance, will they still consider me for the job? Or will they make a polite excuse for not interviewing me?**

**Possible positive consequences:**

- The employer may believe that a blind or visually impaired person can do the job. They are not put off by your revelation and will consider you assertive.
- The employer will think you are confident and well-adjusted to your disability.

**Possible negative consequences:**

- The employer may have no experience with blindness and will find an excuse not to interview you.
- The employer is afraid that you may sue under the ADA. They will interview you, but will not hire you.
- The employer had a bad experience with another blind or visually impaired employee. They may assume you are the same and not interview you.

**2. What if I reveal my blindness by going to the job site and picking up an application? Will the employer still interview me?**

**Possible positive consequences:**

- The employer may ask the office or personnel clerk how you seemed. Were you competent, pleasant, and assertive? They will decide to interview you based on their observations, rather than speculation.
- The employer has an open mind. They will assume that you are competent and interview you.
- The employer may have experience with competent blind people. They will give you an interview based on



their experience.

**Possible negative consequences:**

- Someone in the personnel office may be prejudiced towards blind people. They may prevent you from getting an interview.
- The employer may have no experience with blindness and will find an excuse not to interview you.
- The employer is afraid that you may sue under the ADA. They will interview you, but will not hire you.
- The employer had a bad experience with another blind or visually impaired employee. They may assume you are the same and not interview you.

**3. If I wait until I get to the interview to reveal my visual impairment, will I still get the job?**

**Possible positive consequences:**

- Some employers don't mind the surprise. You can address their concerns, if any, at the interview.
- Your application and/or resume proved you are qualified and should be interviewed. Now you can demonstrate your competence in person.
- The employer doesn't have preconceived notions of what blind people can do. You can demonstrate your competence in person.

**Possible negative consequences:**

- The employer may not like being surprised. They may wonder if you have failed to mention other things.
- Some employers may feel they are being set up or that this is a warm-up for a lawsuit if you're not hired.
- Some employers may be uncomfortable and distracted by your disability. They may pay more attention to your blindness than who you are and what you have to offer.

**4. I have pretty good vision. Maybe I can get away with not revealing it? Won't I have a better chance of getting the job?**

**Possible positive consequences:**

- The employer won't notice and will hire you, assuming you have no disability.
- Your co-workers may not notice once you're on the job.

**Possible negative consequences:**

- The employer will notice something is different. They will feel

uncomfortable and not hire you.

- The employer is not required to make ADA accommodations for a disability if they don't know about it.
- If you are hired and have not disclosed, you may not be protected under the ADA.
- Your employer or co-workers will notice that you have trouble with printed materials. They may assume that you have a learning or cognitive impairment.

So, what to do? Only you can decide. Discuss this with your VR Counselor and VR Teacher before making a decision.

## **5.6 Making a Personal Data Sheet (PDS)**

A Personal Data Sheet is not a resume. A PDS is used to complete job applications. A PDS assures you have all the information handy when filling out a job application. If you are unable access printed applications, someone else can use your PDS to complete it for you. Resumes can be created from information on the PDS.



On the PDS, you include everything that you think might pop up on an application. The advantage of a PDS is you are less likely to make errors, transpose numbers, or misspell words. If needed, another person can simply copy from the PDS to the job application. Below is typical information on a PDS.

### **Personal Data Sheet Example:**

#### **Personal Information**

Complete name, address, and phone number.

Emergency contact information name, phone, and relation.

#### **Education**

GED or HS Diploma, date obtained, school, and address.

Name of college or technical school, city, state, degree, or certification obtained. Major area of study, date of degree, or certification earned.

#### **Work History**

(Go back at least 10 years. Repeat the following information as

needed.)

Job title.

Company name, address, city, state, zip, phone number, and supervisor.

Job duties.

Beginning date, beginning salary.

Ending date, ending salary.

Reason for leaving.

### **Job Related Skills and Abilities**

Include office equipment, PC hardware and software, and typing speed if known.



### **Languages**

Include languages other than English that you speak or write.

### **Military Experience**

### **Three References**

Include name, job title, and phone number.

### **Personal Data Sheet Activity:**

Begin making your PDS even if you are not yet ready to look for work. Then when you do begin your job search, the information will be there. Write your PDS in Braille when you have learned uncontracted Braille for writing practice. You may also want to hand write it using a writing guide for practice. Eventually, you will want to use a typewriter or computer to make a print copy.

The American Foundation for the Blind has an accessible Career Connect Web site. It has a free accessible PDS and resume builder program. The program saves what you have done and will let you print it out. When you are ready to create your resume, the program will merge necessary information from your PDS. This saves you from having to re-enter the information. Because the PDS is stored online, you will be able to get to it from any Internet-connected computer. The AFB Web address is [www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=7](http://www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=7).

## **5.7 Job Applications and Resumes**

Practice filling out job applications and developing resumes before you actually need them. Then when the time comes for the real thing, you will be ahead of the game.

### **Job Applications:**

Some jobs do not require a resume, but do require a job application. Your PDS should have all the information you need. Please see the section on Personal Data Sheets for more information.

Develop a PDS in your own preferred medium and one in regular print. You may be asked to fill out a job application on paper or computer that is not accessible. Having a PDS in regular print allows an assistant or scribe to fill out the application. For practice, go to several businesses and request a job application. Use your PDS to complete three job applications.

### **Resume Purpose:**

The resume is not a job application. Its purpose is to help you get an interview. Employers will rarely hire based on a resume. A good resume, however, will help you get an interview. A resume highlights your strengths and draws attention to what you have to offer an employer. It should be tailored to the job you are applying for. Your resume has to sell you in short order, sometimes in as little as 30 seconds. You may have all the requirements for a particular position. However, the resume is a failure if the employer does not decide to interview you.



Effective resumes are clearly focused on a specific job title. They address the employer's stated requirements for the position. It is important to know about the particular job duties and skills. Organizing your resume around these points makes it more effective. The more you know about the employer and position, the better. This helps you tailor your resume to fit that specific job.

### **Resume Formats:**

There are many different types of resumes. The most common are Chronological, Functional, and Combination.

### **Chronological Resume:**

In the chronological resume, job history is organized chronologically with the most recent job listed first. Job titles and employers are emphasized. Duties and accomplishments are described in detail. A chronological resume is easy to read and highlights career growth. It is suited to those whose career goals are clearly defined and those whose job objectives are in line with their work history.

#### **A chronological resume is advantageous when:**

- your recent employers and/or job titles are impressive;
- you are staying in the same career field;
- your job history shows progress; and
- you are working in a field where traditional job search methods are used (e.g., education, government).

#### **A chronological resume is not advantageous when:**

- you are changing career fields;
- you have changed employers frequently;
- you want to de-emphasize age; and
- you have been recently absent from the job market or have gaps in employment.

### **Functional Resume:**

A functional resume highlights skills and accomplishments developed through work, academic, and community experiences. Your skills and potential can be stressed. Lack of experience or possible gaps in work history are de-emphasized.



#### **The functional resume is advantageous when:**

- you want to emphasize skills not used in recent work experience;
- the focus is on skills and accomplishments rather than a lengthy employment history;
- you are changing careers/re-entering the job market;
- you want to market skills and experience gained through coursework and/or volunteer experience;
- your career growth in the past has not been continuous and progressive;

- you have a variety of unrelated work experiences; and
- your work has been freelance, consulting, or temporary in nature.

**The functional resume is not advantageous when:**

- you have little work experience or leadership experience;
- you want to emphasize promotions and career growth; and
- you are working in highly traditional fields where employers should be highlighted. Example: teaching, accounting, and politics.

**Combination Resume:**

This format combines the elements of the chronological and functional types. It presents accomplishments and skills in category sections or a single section called “Qualifications Summary.” It also includes a brief work history and education summary. This format can be used if you wish to change to a job in a related career field or wish to strategically promote your most marketable skills.

**Constructing Your Resume**

Categories of information you include on your resume should provide answers to these questions:

- Contact section: Your name and how you can be reached.
- Objective statement: What do you want to do?
- Experience section: What can you do?
- Education section: What have you learned?
- Employment section: What have you done?

**Categories:**

Sequence the categories according to what is most important to the employer and your career objective. A recent college graduate with little experience will usually put the education section first since it is the most significant qualification. Education will also be listed first when it is a qualifying requirement. Example: teaching, law, medicine, or engineering. Significant work or leadership experience may call for presenting the experience or employment sections first. This is often done when applying for jobs in sales, public relations, or merchandising.

**Contact information:**

- Begin your resume with your name by capitalizing and using bold type.
- Include street address, city, state, and zip code.



- Include phone number(s) where you can be reached weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Designate your home phone with an 'H,' and work number with 'W,' or a 'Messages' number.
- Add an email address if it is checked regularly.

### **Career/Job Objective:**

The objective informs the employer of your career goal and targeted interests. It should describe the focus of your job search. If your resume is broad, relay the most relevant objective in an accompanying cover letter. A good objective includes type and/or level of position, type and style of organization, and skills/qualifications.

#### **A career/job objective is advantageous when:**

- You want to specify your interests and where you would fit in the organization.
- You want to present the impression of a focused, self-confident person.

#### **A career/job objective is not advantageous when it is:**

- Too broad and meaningless, reflecting indecision.
- Too exclusive, eliminating you from jobs for which you might be considered.

### **Qualifications or Experience Summary:**

A summary can condense an extensive background by emphasizing experiences and accomplishments in brief keyword phrases. The summary is accomplishment-oriented and provides an overview of your work experience. It can also serve to summarize relevant academic, volunteer, and leadership experience. This is useful for those with limited work experience.

A summary is most appropriate for someone with substantial experience. It is good for those who are changing careers and want to demonstrate transferable skills. It is useful for those with a varied background.

### **Scannable Resumes:**

Large businesses often request scannable resumes because of the large volume of resumes they receive. Scannable resumes look for keywords and accomplishment statements and summaries. If you know

your resume will be electronically scanned, consider a summary.

**Example:** Accomplished editor, news reporter, and promotional writer. Demonstrated skills in project management and staff development.

**Example:** Two years' experience as office administrator; four years' teaching experience living abroad; two and one-half years' high school teaching experience; M.B.A. in International Business and Information Systems; B.A. in Mathematics; French language fluency.

### **Education:**

If your education relates to your objective and is within the past three years, it should be the first section. If not, education should follow the work experience section of your resume. Start with your most recent degree or the program in which you are currently enrolled. List your other degrees or relevant education in reverse chronological order. Highlight your degree by using bold type or capital letters.

If the degree is relevant to your job objective, begin with the degree and emphasis, followed by university, location of university, and date of graduation or anticipated date of graduation.

**Example:** M.S., Communications Engineering, the George Washington University, Washington, DC, May 2008.

If degree/program is not directly related to current job objective, begin with the university, followed by the location, degree and emphasis, and graduation date. If you are within two semesters of graduation, do not use "expected" or "anticipated" with month/year of graduation. If you have a high GPA, include it on your resume. You may want to highlight your GPA on a new line or in an educational highlights section.

**Example:** The George Washington University, Washington, DC, B.A., Political Science, May 2008. GPA 3.4.

### **Educational Highlights:**

This section is most effective when you have impressive educational experiences that directly relate to your objective. Add skills and specific knowledge through education and related activities rather than work experience. Highlight coursework, research, study abroad, leadership,

and student activities that complement your objective. Consider listing relevant coursework under the appropriate degree.

**Example:** Relevant coursework:  
Investment and Portfolio Management,  
Advanced Financial Management,  
Marketing Research, International Banking.

An alternative to highlighting courses is to list the skills and knowledge acquired through important courses and research.



**Example:** Developed model investment portfolio for Fortune 500 Company. Analyzed stock market trends using state-of-the-art computer simulation programs. Invested innovative capital formations strategies at metropolitan Washington area investment firms. Designed promotional campaign for new consumer product in a targeted market.

You may want to describe research or design projects.

**Example:** Design Projects: RF radio control, Laser and Microwave Amplifiers, Transmission Lines. Research: “Brazilian Economic Policies beyond the Coffee Exports,” “U.S. Foreign Policy: Transition in Latin America.”

### **Employment Experience (Chronological):**

Begin with your current/most recent position and work backward, chronologically. Devote more space to recent employment if your job titles relate to your current job objective, start each position description with job titles. If not, begin with the organization. Follow job title and organizational information with the organization’s city and state. Use the first and last month and year to describe dates of employment.

**Example:** Telecommunications Engineering Aide, Center for Telecommunications Studies, Washington, DC, September 1990-January 1996.

Describe the last three to five positions in detail. Summarize earlier positions unless relevant to your objective. Do not show every position change with each employer. Only list in detail the most recent job and briefly summarize promotions. Do not repeat skills that are common to

several positions.

Within each position, stress the major accomplishments and responsibilities that demonstrate your competency. It is not necessary to include all responsibilities. They will be assumed by employers.



Tailor your position descriptions to future job/career objectives. If writing a two-page resume, place the most marketable information on the first page.

### **Employment Experience (Functional):**

Use two to four sections to summarize each area of functional skill or expertise. Develop the functional skill headings based on the skills you want to market. Choose those that are the most related to your targeted objective. Describe your skills in short phrases and place under the appropriate functional skill categories. Rank the phrases within each category and place the most important skill or accomplishment first.

### **Examples:**

#### **WRITING**

- Reported on-the-spot news stories for suburban Washington newspapers.
- Provided in-depth coverage of Capitol Hill issues, including unemployment compensation and merit pay for teachers.
- Edited and marketed a brochure for a cultural/educational program designed to focus on life in London. Resulted in a 30% increase in program attendance.

### **Do not identify employers within functional skills sections.**

List a brief history of your actual work experience at the end of the section, giving job title, employer, and dates.

If you have no work experience or a very spotty work record, leave out the employment section entirely. You may also summarize the nature of your jobs without providing specific details. If you do this, be prepared to discuss your specific jobs in more detail at the job interview.

Both chronological and functional resumes must be brief, emphasizing your experience and accomplishments. Resumes are often your first

introduction to the employer. They dramatically impact the screening process. Invest the time to create an excellent resume. This will increase job opportunities and career advancement.

It may be a good idea to make both a scannable (plain text) resume and a print resume. As a job seeker, you may want to call the company and see if they scan their resumes. If so, forward a copy that will easily scan. If not, forward a more attractive print copy of your resume. We all know that “image” is a major contributor to your job search success.



### **Resume Cover Letters:**

Cover letters are expected for all positions. If salary requirements are requested in a job advertisement, they should be provided in your cover letter. It is OK to say that the salary is negotiable. The resume and cover letter may be the first contact and first impression the employer has with you. It should be perfect in its visual presentation and quality of the written word. See sample resume cover letter example in Appendix B.

### **Resume Resources:**

- Discuss the information with your VR Teacher or Counselor or with those in your job club for ideas and suggestions.
- Your VR Teacher can provide tips and ideas for developing your resume.
- Texas Workforce Centers in your area offer free resume training.
- When you have a specific job in mind, find out what you can about the job and company.
- Tailor your resume so that your qualifications meet the employer’s needs. The company is most interested in how you can help them meet their business needs.
- See sample resumes in Appendix C.
- AFB CareerConnect® is an online free service allows you make both a personal data sheet and a resume. You will need access to a computer to do this. Your VR Teacher can provide more information. The AFB Web address is [www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=7](http://www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=7).

### **5.8 Am I Ready for Employment?**

These questions should be discussed with both your VR Counselor and VR Teacher.

- Is my location and residence supportive of employment?
- Do I have adequate transportation to maintain a job? Are there job opportunities, resources, or support systems in the area?
- Does the expected income from employment exceed my current income? DSB emphasizes competitive outcomes. This means the job should pay at least minimum wage in an integrated setting.
- Do I demonstrate appropriate work attitudes and behaviors? These include interest, dependability, motivation, leadership, independence, self-confidence, initiative, cooperation, teamwork, and ability to receive feedback and criticism.
- Do I have work personality traits, such as the ability to relate to co-workers? Other traits to consider are flexibility, ability to accept supervision, and ability to manage frustration.
- Do I have learning ability for work?
- Can I follow written instructions?
- Can I learn varied or complex tasks and follow diagrams or models?
- Can I measure and count?
- Can I make decisions, solve problems, follow oral instructions, and learn to correct errors?
- Do I have average or better work habits? Examples: attendance, neatness, organization, punctuality, adaptability, safety awareness, industriousness, maintenance of effort.

## **5.9 How to Look for a Job**

- Make job hunting a full time job. You work 40 hours a week for an employer. You should work that much for yourself when looking for a job.
- Write out a job seeking plan. List the employers you intend to contact and how and when you plan to do so.
- Start the job-seeking process early in the day to allow time for several interviews.
- Do not approach an employer at lunchtime or at the end of the day.
- Be on time for appointments.
- Follow up on job leads immediately. Contact the employer at the earliest possible time, in the manner specified. If the employer says, “call first,” then call first. If a personal



- application is required, do not call except to make an appointment.
- Keep detailed notes on who you contacted, the results of the contact, and your next step with that employer.
  - Review your progress regularly with your VR Counselor and Teacher. Get their suggestions and assistance if needed.

Eighty percent of jobs are filled through word of mouth from friends, relatives, and informal contacts. You are more likely to find a job by following up leads that you learn about informally than from want ads. Job seeking should be aggressive. Use every possible source of job leads to find the position most suitable for you.

### **Personal Contacts:**

Friends, neighbors, and relatives may know of job openings where they work. They may also have heard of job openings.

### **Former Employers:**

Former employers may be willing to re-employ you. They also may know of other similar businesses that need your skills.

### **Neighborhood Businesses:**

Neighborhood businesses may have unadvertised openings. They may know about the needs of other area businesses that have openings. Common neighborhood businesses include gas stations, grocery stores, beauty shops, banks, insurance offices, dry cleaners, specialty shops, and restaurants.

### **The Media:**

**Newspaper Help Wanted Section--** Newspaper ads normally give a description of the job. They often describe the type of person they're looking for, a number to call or write to, or a Web address.

#### **Newspaper Business information**

**section--** Check for new businesses that are opening or local businesses that are expanding.

**Radio and Television--** Public service ads often have special times set aside to provide job leads.

**Telephone Yellow Pages--** These ads group businesses together on the basis of



what they do. This may be useful in making your list of employers to contact.

**Help Wanted signs**– Marquees and bulletin boards and windows may contain help wanted messages. Enlist friends and neighbors to look for these as they go about their daily activities.

**Libraries**– Often have a number of resource books containing both general and specific occupational information. Many libraries have information in computer searchable versions as well as paper versions.

**Dictionary of Occupational Titles**– Includes standardized and comprehensive descriptions of job duties and related information for 20,000 occupations.

**Occupational Outlook Handbook**– Has career information, employment projects, occupational briefs, and an index of job titles by DOT (Dictionary of Occupational Titles) or SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) codes.

**College Placement Offices**– Have alphabetized listing of large companies that intend to recruit college graduates that year.

### **Internet:**

The Internet plays a major role in hunting for employment, but is only one of many job seeking strategies. Below are some useful Web sites.

Work in Texas: [www.twc.state.tx.us/jobs/job.html](http://www.twc.state.tx.us/jobs/job.html)

Texas Workforce Offices:

[www.texasworkforce.org/dirs/wdas/wdamap.html#CapitalArea](http://www.texasworkforce.org/dirs/wdas/wdamap.html#CapitalArea)

Career Connect (AFB): [www.afb.org/careerconnect](http://www.afb.org/careerconnect)

ACB Job Connection: [www.acb.org/acbjobs](http://www.acb.org/acbjobs)

e-Sights Careers Network: [www.esight.org](http://www.esight.org)

Job Accommodation Network: [www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu)

USA Jobs: [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov)

America's Job Bank: [www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us)

Career Builder: [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com)

Career Site: [www.careersite.com](http://www.careersite.com)

Net-Temps: [www.net-temp.com](http://www.net-temp.com)

Monster.com: [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)



### **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC):**

Offers a large range of services including Job Counseling, Job Information Center, Job Bank online, Internet and phone registration, testing for employment, and free courses in resume, job search, and interviewing skills.

### **Community Resources:**

**Chamber of Commerce**– Publishes a list of new employers and general information concerning area businesses. It sponsors the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) program. This program helps find jobs for individuals who are hard to place.



**Labor Unions**– Have apprenticeship programs available. They also may serve as referral sources to individual job sites. Some locals will help applicants pay membership dues and secure necessary equipment until they are employed.

**Churches**– Have a variety of groups and organizations whose members may be aware of job openings. Ministers often have contacts throughout the community.

**Schools**– Often have placement offices, particularly at the college level. High school and college guidance counselors may have a number of resources to use in locating suitable employment.

**Volunteer Bureau and the United Way**– Have a number of programs and personnel committed to improving conditions in the local area. They may be willing to work with you or provide volunteer opportunities. They may know of job openings with potential for you.

Nothing and no one should be overlooked as a potential source of information about employment. You can't be too thorough. The more effort you put into your search, the more likely you are to FIND the job you want.

### **Six Mistakes that can Derail the Job-Seeking Process:**

A study with human resource professionals at corporations across North America reveals costly mistakes that can derail your chances of winning your dream job:

- Longwinded resumes and cover letters. Resumes and cover letters that are short and to the point suggest good communication skills.
- Grammar and spelling mistakes. These errors suggest that you don't take time to check things.
- Not preparing answers to potential interview questions. It's better not to answer in 100 words when 20 would do.
- Not asking the right questions in the interview. Every interviewer asks, "Do you have any questions?" If you have no questions, they may doubt your sincerity and desire to become part of the company.

- Criticizing former employers. Just don't do it.
- Not presenting yourself professionally at the interview. Little things can make wrong impressions. Don't wear an excessive amount of perfume or cologne. Control nervous habits, mannerisms, or fidgeting. Eye contact and a good handshake are essential.

### **5.10 Volunteer Work Experience**

If you have little or no work experience, volunteering can be an effective way to gain experience. Volunteer experience can be included in your job resume. Discuss doing volunteer work with your VR Counselor and VR Teacher. Contact these organizations for more information:

Volunteer Match: [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)

Volunteer Solutions: [www.volunteersolutions.org](http://www.volunteersolutions.org)

### **5.11 Informational Interviews – Gathering Job Information**

The informational interview can be a valuable tool for making decisions about your career. Discuss doing an informational interview with your VR counselor and VR Teacher.



- You will obtain a great deal of information about your career field and the skills needed to do that job effectively.
- You have the opportunity to make personal contact among management-level personnel.
- You gain insight into the hidden job market.
- You become aware of the needs of the employers and the realities of employment.
- You gain invaluable interviewing experience and you gain visibility.
- In short, it prepares you for what's in store. It allows you the opportunity to network with others in your field of interest.

#### **Identify an Occupation You Want to Know More About:**

Find out as much information as you can about each place before setting up an interview. Find out the manager's name or the person who does the hiring. This can be done by telephone or by asking your VR Counselor or Teacher. Use information from the Texas Workforce Center or your VR Employment Assistance Specialist.

### **Schedule an Informational Interview Prior to a Job Opening:**

It is a good idea to set up an informational interview before there is an actual job opening. Many managers will feel uneasy talking with a potential candidate when the agency is recruiting for the position.

### **Never Ask for a Job:**

This will help set you apart from the hundreds of others who are walking in asking for jobs. Approach the employer with the attitude that you are seeking career advice.

### **Prepare Your Questions Ahead of Time:**

Ask only those questions that are appropriate and important to you. Convey your motivation and interest by acknowledging that the information they are giving you is important.



### **Scheduling the Informational Interview:**

Contact the resource person by telephone or letter. Try to schedule some of your interviews with managers and supervisors who have the authority to hire. Identify yourself and explain that you are researching careers in the contact's field. Let them know if you were referred and by whom.

Informational interviews are generally about 20 to 30 minutes long. Be flexible in your scheduling. Volunteer interviewees may have prior commitments. If this should occur, ask about a convenient time when you could call back. The following is a suggested approach:

“Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am conducting career research in your field of occupation. I would like to meet and talk with you for about 30 minutes to find out more about your field of expertise.”

Emphasize that you are simply trying to get firsthand information. Whatever they share with you will be appreciated.

If you prefer to arrange an appointment in person, treat receptionists as resources. They hold the key to getting inside if you do not have an inside contact or referral. Ask them some of your questions. You will usually get good information. They know how the business works. They know the names of key people and job requirements. It is important that they understand what you want. If you ask them something they feel is

better answered by someone else, they will usually give you a referral.

### **Before the Interview:**

The day before the interview, call to confirm your appointment with the contact person. Arrive 10 minutes early. Carry note-taking materials for names and phone numbers.

### **Dress Appropriately:**

Be prepared to make a good impression on the employer. A good practice is to dress one level up from the position you want.

### **Bring Your Resume:**

Bring your resume with you, and ask the person you are interviewing if they would critique it.

### **Questions to Ask at the Informational Interview:**

The following are some typical questions. Don't ask all of them; just use those of interest to you.

- What is a typical day like and what do you do?
- What kinds of problems and decisions do you deal with?
- What jobs and experiences led you to this position?
- Which have been most helpful?
- What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?
- What other jobs can you get with the same background?
- What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?
- How does a person progress in your field?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation and to progress?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
- Who else do you know who is doing similar kinds of work or uses similar skills?
- What can you tell me about the employment outlook in your occupational field?
- What social obligations go along with a job in your occupation?
- Are there organizations you are expected to join?
- Are there other things you are expected to do outside work hours?



People are often happy to discuss their positions. They can provide you with a wealth of information. Keep the conversation brief, friendly, and focused on the contact person's job and career field.

Be prepared to share something about yourself, but do not dominate the interview by talking about yourself. You are there to get information about the career field. Don't count on it, but be aware that many informational interviews turn into actual employment interviews later on.

If it seems that you are being interviewed, ask them if they are. Then you can emphasize your functional/transferable skills and why you feel they relate to this job.

Prepare answers to questions the person might ask you during the informational interview. It will be helpful for you to have brainstormed short, concise, and informative answers to the following:

- Why are you interested in this type of work?
- Why do you feel you would be good at it?
- How would you sum up your work history to make it fit with this agency?
- What do you truly want from this contact and how will you use the information?
- What interests you about this agency, department, or division?
- What stage of your career search are you in?

### **Ask if You Can Stay in Contact:**

You have spent 20 to 30 minutes with this person, asking questions, getting advice, and sharing a little about yourself. Ask for a business card. This begins your employment contact network. Contact them every so often. They may not have a job opening, but may know of other businesses that do. Ask if they could give you the names of others to talk to. Ask if you have permission to say that they referred you.

### **Always Send a Thank You Note:**

This is a good way to keep in touch and to be remembered. Let them know they were helpful and thank them for the time spent. As a nice touch, quote something they said, word for word. Ask them to keep you in mind for other information that may be helpful in your career research. Include your address and phone number under your signature.

## **5.12 Interviewing Basics**

The interview can be the single most important factor in getting a job. Most hiring decisions are made during the first interview. How well you do probably will depend on how well you prepare for it. Make sure you understand:

- your own capabilities and limitations,
- what the job you want entails,
- what you can contribute to the job, and
- how to present yourself in the most positive manner.

There are three types of employment interviews you may encounter.

- **Patterned interview:** The employer asks all interviewees the same exact questions.
- **Non-directed interview:** The employer uses a more conversational approach. They do not rely on any predetermined questions.
- **Panel Interview:** The employer will have a panel of interviewers ask you questions. These may be pre-determined questions for all interviewees or they may be more conversational based.

### **Eye Contact and Handshakes:**

In the United States, you're expected to offer a firm handshake and make eye contact at the same time. Its purpose is to demonstrate good will. Rejecting a handshake and not making eye contact is a form of rejection. It can be insulting to the interviewer.



It is not necessary to be able to see the other person's eyes or face to make "eye contact." Eye contact means that your face is looking or pointing at their face. Eye contact does not mean you "lock eyes" with the other person. It is OK to look away part of the time. You should still spend the majority of the interview looking directly at the interviewer's face even if you cannot see it.

### **Handshake:**

The handshake is immediately initiated when the two hands touch. It is commonly done upon meeting, during interviews, and when parting. In business situations it is considered the standard greeting for both sexes.

Extend your hand and grip the other person's hand so that the web of your thumbs meets. Shake just a couple of times or for about three seconds. The motion is from the elbow, not the shoulder. End the handshake cleanly, before the introduction is over.

### **Impressions:**

Remember the last time you got a limp handshake or a bone crusher. What impression did it make on you? It probably wasn't positive. If you're a sloppy shaker, the interviewer may conclude you lack confidence or have other issues. That may lead to a poor impression.

### **Handshake Etiquette:**

When blind and sighted people shake hands, it is appropriate for the blind person to extend their hand first. This helps avoid awkward situations where sighted people are not sure what to do.

The blind person should extend their hand no more than 12 inches in front of their body. This avoids accidentally poking the other person. Some extend the back of the hand if standing close to the other person or with the opposite sex. When two blind people shake hands, it is appropriate for one to say something like "here's my hand" when initiating the handshake. Some extend the back of the hand to avoid being too personal while searching for the other hand.

If a sighted person wishes to shake hands with a blind person, they can verbally indicate this. They can then touch the back of the blind person's hand with the back of their hand.

If a blind person has their hands full when introduced, they should simply nod their head as they respond to the introduction.

Sometimes a sighted person may have their hands full when a blind person offers their hand. The sighted person should indicate their hands are full at the moment as they respond to the introduction.

If you're seated, always stand when introduced. This allows you to shake hands on an even level. That goes for women as well as men. If you are seated at a table where reaching the other person is difficult or awkward, you don't have to stand. Wear printed name tags at meetings

close to the right shoulder. That's where a sighted person's eye naturally wanders when shaking hands.

If you have a drink in your right hand, hold it in the left hand while introductions are going around. This avoids offering a cold wet hand to shake. If you have habitually cold or clammy hands, make a quick swipe of your hand on your skirt or trousers. This helps ensure your hand is dry when presented. If you have sweaty palms, try rubbing unscented antiperspirant on them before the meeting.

### **Before, At, and After the Interview:**

#### **Before the Interview:**

- Determine preferred salary range and hours.
- Learn about the products and services of the business.
- Learn about the essential duties of the job and determine how you would perform them.
- Decide what accommodations, if any, you might need.
- Practice doing a mock interview with someone.
- Decide how you're getting to the interview.
- Make a practice run to the work location and office.
- Prepare your interview wardrobe. Ask for feedback.
- Get plenty of sleep the night before.



#### **At the interview:**

- Bring only essential items to the interview. (Resume, references, certifications, licenses, slate and stylus, or other note-taking tools).
- Go alone to the interview. Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early so you can relax. Review what you want to say.
- Dress one level up from how their employees normally dress.
- Minimize jewelry, perfume, or cologne.
- Be independent in the receptionist area. Be pleasant and friendly but businesslike to everyone you meet.
- Initiate a handshake if you cannot see the interviewer's hand.
- Don't smoke before or during the interview.
- Don't chew gum during the interview.
- Cordially decline an offer to accept a drink or food during interview.

This avoids issues of where to place the item and speaking with a mouthful.

- Stand until you're invited to sit. When sitting, use your best posture.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- Stress your qualifications without exaggeration.
- Emphasize experience and training related to the job opening. If you know the company's products and services, you should refer to them.
- It is impressive if you have positive knowledge about the company.
- After being asked a question, it is OK to pause and think about your answer.
- Answer questions with more than a "yes" or "no," but do not ramble.
- A successful interview occurs if the interviewer talks 50 percent of the time.
- Speak positively of past employers.
- Avoid discussing personal or other problems.
- Be prepared if the interviewer says, "You're perfect for the job. When can you start?" Preparing for this question can prevent a snap decision. Most employers will allow you decision time.
- Almost all interviewers will ask if you have questions. Make sure you have a list of questions already prepared to ask.
- Thank the employer for the interview and shake hands.

### **After the Interview:**

Pat yourself on the back for the effort you made. Review your effort, as each interview is a learning experience. Send a brief thank-you note immediately after the interview. Call a few days after the interview to see if a hiring decision has been made. If you're turned down, ask the employer if he knows of other companies that are hiring for similar positions.

### **Mock Interviews:**

Practice doing at least three or more mock interviews. Your VR Teacher can help. Record the "interview" with a tape recorder, digital recorder, or video camera. After the interview, play back the recording and notice how often you say "um," "OK," "hmm," and other things. Ask the mock interviewer to complete the Mock Interview Feedback Checklist in Appendix D and discuss it with you. Below are common questions that might be asked.

- Can you tell me why you want this job?



- Why do you want to work for this company?
- What work-related experience qualifies you for this job?
- What computer experience do you have?
- Could you please tell me about yourself?
- What are your salary requirements?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years?
- What things do you like to do in your spare time?
- What have you been doing since your last job back in 2004?
- You've mentioned you received training at the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center. Just what is CCRC?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- If I contact one of your references, what do you think they might say about you?
- There was a blind lady who worked here a while back. She just didn't work out. How will you be different?
- I'm interviewing six candidates. Why should I choose you?
- I noticed you use a cane to get around, is there anything you want to tell me about yourself? Ask the person doing the mock interview to give you feedback using the Mock Interview checklist in Appendix D.

### **Telephone Interviews:**

Employers use telephone interviews as a way to screen and narrow the pool of applicants. They also are used to minimize the expenses for out-of-town applicants. When you are actively job searching, be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's notice. You never know when an employer or a networking contact may call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk.



Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview. Compile a list of your strengths and weaknesses, your background, skills, and accomplishments. Have a list of answers to typical interview questions and possible answers. Keep your resume handy so it's at your fingertips when you need to answer questions.

Have note-taking materials available. Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted. If the time isn't convenient, ask if you could talk at another time and suggest some alternatives. Clear the room. Evict the kids and the pets. Turn off the stereo and the TV. Close the door.

Talking on the phone isn't as easy as it seems. Practice with your VR Teacher or another person and have them tape record it over the phone. You'll be able to hear your "ums," "uhs," and "OKs." You can practice reducing them from your conversational speech. This practice also will help with in-person interviews.

## **Chapter 6: Resources and Support**

### **6.1 Adaptive Aid Catalogs**

Note: Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services does not endorse any company and is not responsible for content on any Web site other than the DARS Web site.

**Ann Morris Enterprises** Phone: 1-800-454-3175 [www.annmorris.com](http://www.annmorris.com)

**Carolyn's Products for Enhanced Living** Phone: 1-800-648-2266

**Independent Living Aids** Phone: 1-800-537-2118  
[www.independentliving.com](http://www.independentliving.com)

**Innovative Rehabilitation Technology** Phone: 1-800-322-4784  
[www.irti.net](http://www.irti.net)

**L S & S Group** Phone: 1-800-468-4789 [www.lssgroup.com](http://www.lssgroup.com)

**Lighthouse International** Phone: 1-800-829-0500 [www.lighthouse.org](http://www.lighthouse.org)

**Massachusetts Association for the Blind** Phone: 1-800-682-9200  
[www.mablind.org](http://www.mablind.org)

**Maxi Aids** Phone: 1-800-522-6294 [www.maxiaids.com](http://www.maxiaids.com)

**National Association for the Visually Handicapped** Phone: 212-889-3141 [www.navh.org](http://www.navh.org)

**Option Central** Phone: 414-499-9699

**Science Products for the Blind** Phone: 1-800-888-7400

**See-More Vision Aiding Products** Phone: 1-800-428-6673  
[www.seemorevision.com](http://www.seemorevision.com)

**Sense-Sations Associated Services for the Blind** Phone: 215-625-0600

**South Dakota Industries for the Blind** Phone: 1-800-223-5145  
[www.sdib.org](http://www.sdib.org)

**Spalding Magnifiers and Low Vision** Phone: 888-855-8666

**Speak to Me Catalog** Phone: 1-800-248-9965

**Vis/Aids** Phone: 718-847-4734

## **6.2 Community, State, and National Resources**

### **Directory Assistance Exemption:**

Local telephone companies provide free directory assistance (1411). This service is for blind individuals who are unable to use the telephone book. Contact your local and long distance carrier for information and an application.

### **Texas State Library Talking Book Program:**

Lending library of audiotape, large print, and Braille books. Four-track cassette players are available on loan. Web site: [www.tsl.state.tx.us/tbp](http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/tbp)  
Phone: 1-800-252-9605.

### **The Hadley School for the Blind:**

Free correspondence courses for the blind, visually impaired, and their families. Courses available in academic subjects, independent living, recreation, and Braille reading and writing. Call for catalog/application. Web site: [www.hadley-school.org](http://www.hadley-school.org) Phone: 1-800-323-4238.

### **American Foundation for the Blind (AFB):**

AFB is a non-profit organization. It expands possibilities for people with vision loss. AFB's priorities include:

- broadening access to technology and employment,
- elevating the quality of information and tools for vision professionals,
- promoting independent and healthy living for people with vision loss, and
- providing them and their families with relevant and timely resources.

For more than 80 years, AFB has advocated for the rights of people who are blind or visually impaired. Web site: [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

### **American Printing House for the Blind (APH):**

The American Printing House for the Blind is the world's largest non-profit organization. It creates educational, workplace, and independent living products and services for people who are visually impaired. Web site: [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org)

## **6.3 Mentoring and Advocacy**

No one understands vision loss better than someone who has personal experience with it. People who are adjusting to blindness often benefit from associating with other blind individuals. Blind individuals understand the range of issues, concerns, and challenges. Texas is home to a number of outstanding organizations that support people who are blind or have vision impairments. Contact them for more information about their services and membership. They also can provide information about community organizations and resources.

### **National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Texas:**

NFB of Texas is the state's largest organization of blind people. There are hundreds of members living in every part of the state. NFB of Texas promotes the complete and equal integration of blind people into society. NFB of Texas works to remove legal, economic, and social discrimination. It advances public education about blindness. It promotes the right of all blind people to exercise their individual talents and capacities to the fullest. Web site: [www.nfb-texas.org](http://www.nfb-texas.org)

### **American Council of the Blind of Texas (ACBT):**

ACBT is an affiliate of The American Council of the Blind. ACBT represents the interests of blind and visually impaired Texans. It strives to increase the equality, independence, and quality of life for all blind and visually impaired Texans. The majority of members are blind or visually impaired. However, sighted persons who share the common goals of ACBT are welcome to join. ACBT currently has ten chapters and six special interest affiliates. Web site: [www.acbtexas.org](http://www.acbtexas.org)

### **Texas Federation of the Blind (TFB):**

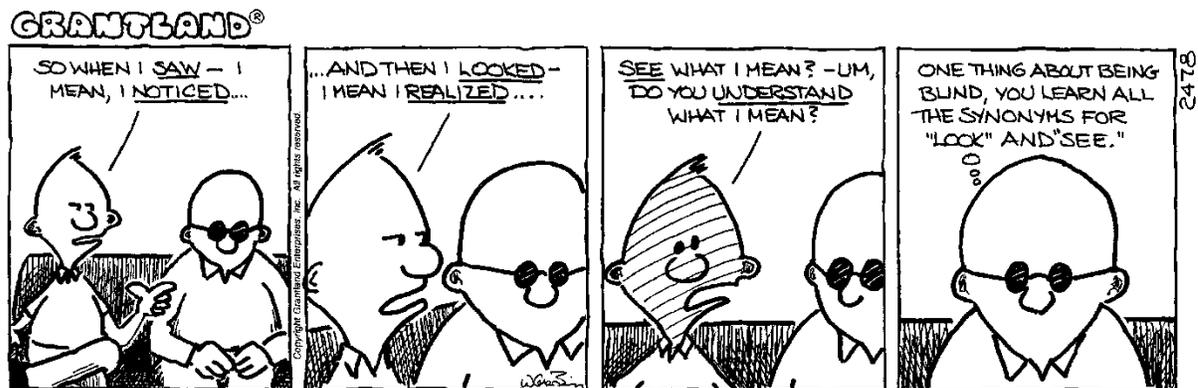
TFB is a non-profit, tax deductible organization. TFB is not affiliated with any other state or national organizations. However, TFB has achieved its goals through cooperation with other organizations and agencies that have similar purposes. TFB provides scholarships, information and

referral services, advocacy, and legislative awareness. Web site: [www.fotb.org](http://www.fotb.org)

### **Self-Advocacy Skills:**

To advocate for yourself, be patient, consistent, and persistent. Contact the organization or company as soon as you notice a problem with the service or goods. Be as concise as possible. Explain the problem and how you would like to see it resolved. Make a note of the day you called and who you talked to. Follow up the contact with a note or letter if possible. Ask that any comments or actions to solve the issue be put in writing to you.

Make follow-up contacts until the issue is resolved. If the person you talk to cannot assist you, go to his/her superior. Document all contacts and who you talked to. If all this fails, contact the organization or agency in your area that governs them. This might be the Better Business Bureau, a city council member, county commissioner, agency or statewide hotline, Advocacy, Inc., or your legislator. Discuss the issue with your VR Teacher or Counselor. If you have trouble finding what agency may govern an organization, contact your local library. The librarians may be able to help you look for the information.



## **6.4 Employment Resources**

### **Volunteer Organizations:**

Volunteering can be an effective way to gain experience. The experience can be included in your job resume. For more information, contact the following organizations.

Volunteer Match: [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)

Volunteer Solutions: [www.volunteersolutions.org](http://www.volunteersolutions.org)

**Texas Workforce Commission (TWC):**

TWC is the state government agency that oversees and provides workforce development services to employers and job seekers of Texas. For employers, TWC offers recruiting, retention, training and retraining, and outplacement services as well as valuable information on labor law and labor market statistics. For job seekers, TWC offers career development information, job search resources, training programs, and, as appropriate, unemployment benefits. Texans can benefit from services offered by TWC and its network of workforce partners.

The Texas Workforce Commission is part of a local/state network. The network is dedicated to developing the workforce of Texas. It comprises 28 local workforce boards. This network gives customers access to local workforce solutions and statewide services in a single location.

Primary services of TWC and its network partners are funded by federal tax revenue and are generally free to all Texans.

[www.texasworkforce.org](http://www.texasworkforce.org)

**Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS):**

Inquiries Line: 1-800-628-5115, [www.dars.state.tx.us](http://www.dars.state.tx.us)

**Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic:**

Recorded textbooks on loan. All academic levels and recorded professional literature. Phone: 1-800-221-4792, [www.rfbd.org](http://www.rfbd.org)

**National Federation of the Blind, National Newsline:**

Newspapers read over the phone. Write: 1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, MD 21230. Phone: 410-659-9314, 512-323-5444, or 713-956-1735, Email: [newsline@nfb-texas.org](mailto:newsline@nfb-texas.org), [www.nfb-texas.org](http://www.nfb-texas.org)

**Texas State Library Talking Book Program:**

Lending library of electronic, audiotape, videotape, large print, and Braille books. Phone: 1-800-252-9605, [www.tsl.state.tx.us/tbp](http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/tbp)

## **Appendixes:**

### **Appendix A: Transferable Skills, Abilities, Strengths Checklist**

This checklist can be used to help develop your ability statement, and resume. Check the words that relate to a skill, ability, or strength that you have. Pick the top five skills, abilities, or strengths and list three proofs for each of them.

#### **Key Transferable Skills**

- Planning
- Organizing or managing projects
- Meeting deadlines
- Solving problems
- Supervising others
- Accepting responsibility
- Controlling budgets
- Increasing sales or efficiency
- Managing people
- Managing money or budgets
- Meeting the public
- Speaking in public
- Writing
- Instructing others

#### **Using my Hands, Dealing with Things**

- Assemble
- Operate tools and machinery
- Build
- Construct, repair buildings
- Make things
- Use complex equipment
- Repair things
- Drive or operate vehicles
- Good with my hands
- Observe, inspect things

## **Dealing with Data**

- Investigate
- Analyze data, facts
- Audit records
- Keep financial records
- Budget
- Locate answers, information
- Calculate, compute
- Manage money
- Classify data
- Negotiate
- Compare
- Inspect, record facts
- Count
- Observe
- Compile
- Research
- Evaluate
- Detail-oriented
- Synthesize
- Take inventory

## **Working with People**

- Administer
- Supervise
- Care for
- Persuade
- Help others
- Understand
- Patient
- Pleasant
- Confront others
- Counsel others
- Sensitive
- Sociable
- Demonstrative
- Teach
- Tactful
- Insight

- \_\_\_ Trust
- \_\_\_ Tolerant
- \_\_\_ Kind
- \_\_\_ Tough
- \_\_\_ Listen
- \_\_\_ Interview others
- \_\_\_ Outgoing
- \_\_\_ Negotiate

### **Using Words, Ideas**

- \_\_\_ Inventive
- \_\_\_ Use words effectively
- \_\_\_ Logical
- \_\_\_ Communicate well verbally
- \_\_\_ Original
- \_\_\_ Write clearly
- \_\_\_ Research
- \_\_\_ Correspond with others
- \_\_\_ Design
- \_\_\_ Remember information
- \_\_\_ Edit
- \_\_\_ Create new ideas
- \_\_\_ Resourceful
- \_\_\_ Speak in public

### **Leadership**

- \_\_\_ Competitive
- \_\_\_ Arrange social functions
- \_\_\_ Decisive
- \_\_\_ Negotiate agreements
- \_\_\_ Plan
- \_\_\_ Motivate people
- \_\_\_ Delegate
- \_\_\_ Self-controlled
- \_\_\_ Direct others
- \_\_\_ Explain things to others
- \_\_\_ Run meetings
- \_\_\_ Self-motivated
- \_\_\_ Get results
- \_\_\_ Solve problems

- \_\_\_\_\_ Take risks
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mediate problems

**Creative, Artistic**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Expressive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Music appreciation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Perform, act
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dance, body movement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Drawing, art
- \_\_\_\_\_ Play instruments
- \_\_\_\_\_ Imaginative
- \_\_\_\_\_ Present artistic ideas

**Best Transferable Skills**

Transferable Skill 1

Three best proofs:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Transferable Skill 2

Three best proofs:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Transferable Skill 3

Three best proofs:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Transferable Skill 4

Three best proofs:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **Appendix B: Sample Cover Letter**

Tom Sails  
1204 West Lake Hills  
Austin, TX 78756  
(Date)

Billie Velson  
President  
Green Solutions  
123 Greentree Drive  
Austin, TX 78756

Dear Mr. Velson:

We spoke on Wednesday afternoon and, as promised, I'm enclosing a copy of my resume.

I'm also enclosing photos of landscaping projects I have completed.

If you have questions, please call me at (111) 111-1111. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Tom Sails

Enclosure

## **Appendix C: Sample Resumes**

### **GLENN T. ROBINSON**

55 S. Bailey Ct.  
Baton Rouge, LA 70332  
(504) 555-4589

**Objective:** A carpenter position that provides the opportunity to further develop trim carpentry and electrical wiring skills.

**Skills Profile:** Two years' experience in residential construction and framework. Ability to accurately interpret blueprints. Good background in residential wiring, trim carpentry, and crew management. Experience in general construction and facility maintenance.

### **Work Experience**

March 1994-current      **Carpenter Framer and Roofing Crew Manager, Scott Construction, Bismarck, ND**

- Serve as carpenter framer for residential builder. Construct one-family home, decks, and porches and complete roofing projects on existing homes.
- Manage roofing crew of three, which has completed all assigned residential roofing projects on schedule and on budget.
- Designed 400-square-foot home deck and successfully managed construction crew of two.
- Assisted in trim carpentry on three \$250,000+ homes, including crown molding and mantle work.
- Assisted in two residential wiring projects under supervision of licensed electrician.

May 1992-May 1994      **General Laborer, Neese Farms, Inc., Bismarck, ND**

- Provided general maintenance on farm equipment, out buildings, and livestock and grain facilities. Mixed feed and cared for 300-head cattle herd.
- Assisted farm owner in completely re-wiring 100-year-old, two-story house, including removing copper fittings and adding 25 outlets and four ground faults.
- Helped construct 2,500-square-foot pole barn and shop area; set frames and supervised pouring of concrete floor and foundation.

Summers 1989-91      **Sales Clerk, Mace Hardware, Bismarck, ND**

- Handled stocking and helped manage inventory. Completed register sales.
- Recommended new display that better grouped supplies, idea suggestion sheets for common home projects, saved customers time and extra trips for overlooked supplies; new displays received high customer satisfaction ratings.

**Education Activities      Indian Trails High School, Bismarck, ND (1992).**

- Making solid oak furniture and scroll saw silhouettes.

**PHYLLIS T. KRAMER**

55 Prairie Lane  
Cincinnati, OH 58365  
(513) 555-3002

**Skills Summary** 12 years' experience in dispatch and driver management. Solid background in scheduling and coordinating delivery dates and times. Good customer relations skills.

**Work Experience**

**Jan 1989 -**

**Current Dispatcher, Holden Transit Company, Jackson, MS**

- Manage dispatching for up to 60 moving van and flatbed drivers.
- Solicit freight from freight brokers, and contact trip lease and port agents to secure flatbed loads.
- Order and procure permits and escorts for over-dimensional, interstate flatbed loads.
- Develop and quote transportation rates to shippers and agents.
- Recommended and implemented new scheduling system, which reduces road hours for drivers and has improved driver safety record.

**Aug 1982 -**

**Dec 1988 Medical Technician, United States Air Force, Honolulu, HI**

- Assisted in medical care of sick and injured military patients. Scheduled and trained personnel. Managed equipment, supplies, and inventory.
- Supervised Aero Medical Evacuation, including coordinating arrival and delivery dates and times of air evacuation missions with Army and Navy personnel.
- Oversaw conversion of cargo aircraft to air evacuation status, which provided needed medical aircraft while making good use of order aircraft.
- Supervised 20-bed surgical ward.

**June 1981-**

**July 1982 Customer Service Representative, Ace Lumber, Jackson, MS**

- Handled customer service requests and inquiries.
- Prepared and coordinated orders for delivery.
- Implemented computerized inventory and delivery system.

**Education Certificate of Management, Jackson Community College, MS (1993)**

**Certification Certified Emergency Medical Technician - State of Mississippi**

**Activities Volunteer, Meyers Memorial Hospital, Jackson, MS**

**Sarah Sellers**

30 Cottage Lane  
Gray Lake, MN 55735  
(612) 342-7000

**Objective**

**A full-time position as a music teacher at the elementary level.**

**Summary of Skills**

- Teaching license with endorsement in musical instruction.
- Experience in tutoring elementary-aged children.
- Skilled in designing hands-on learning centers.
- Solid background as accompanist and assistant choral director.
- Ability to maintain discipline in the classroom while allowing children the freedom to discover the world of music.

**Instructional Experience****Private Piano Instructor, Gray Lake, MN (1991-current)**

- Instruct 10 students in piano and the basics of learning and performing music.
- Host annual recital for students.
- Wrote and published instructional manual for beginning piano students.

**Student Teacher, Gray Lake Elementary School and Warren Memorial Elementary School, Gray Lake School District, Gray Lake, MN (January - March 1995)**

- Created daily lesson plans incorporating a variety of choral and instrumental music experiences for kindergarten through fifth-grade students in two schools.
- Worked with lead teacher to design a modified program for physically challenged students.
- Established program where students visit local nursing home to meet residents and teach them songs, providing a special activity for the residents and a learning/musical experience for the children.
- Created learning centers combining experiences in music and math.

**Tutor, Minnesota State University, East Ridge, MN (1987 - 1989)**

- Provided elementary-aged children with one-on-one education in math and reading.
- Worked with teachers to mainstream two children from remedial to regular reading classes.

## **Appendix D: Mock Interview Feedback Checklist**

### **Rating Scale:**

A=Acceptable, N=Improvement Needed, U=Unacceptable  
Record the interviews using video or audio equipment such as camcorders or digital recorders. Playback and review with the consumer.

- Neat personal appearance. \_\_\_\_\_
- Enters the room gracefully (mobility skills). \_\_\_\_\_
- Clothes clean, pressed, and coordinated. \_\_\_\_\_
- Introduces themselves properly. \_\_\_\_\_
- Presents in a confident, courteous manner. \_\_\_\_\_
- Firm handshake offered. \_\_\_\_\_
- Maintains eye contact throughout interview. \_\_\_\_\_
- Speaks with proper loudness and inflection. \_\_\_\_\_
- Appears enthusiastic about job and company. \_\_\_\_\_
- Proper posture maintained during interview. \_\_\_\_\_
- Distracting mannerisms or excessive use of verbal uhhs, umms, OKs. \_\_\_\_\_
- Responds effectively to questions about:
  - a. Previous work experience, \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Education and training, \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Disability and its effects (if applicable), \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Extended periods of unemployment, \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Wage or salary desired. \_\_\_\_\_
- Asks employer thoughtful questions. \_\_\_\_\_
- Does not appear overly anxious. \_\_\_\_\_
- Self discloses appropriately. \_\_\_\_\_
- Thanks interviewer at conclusion. \_\_\_\_\_
- Extends firm handshake at end. \_\_\_\_\_
- Asks if the interviewer may be contacted about a final decision and when. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Mock Interview Comments:**

## **Appendix E: Low Vision Aids**

### **Magnification:**

- Generally, the stronger the magnification, the smaller the lens.
- Stronger magnification creates greater distortion at the lens' outer edges.
- Aim for the weakest magnification possible to retain field of vision.
- Test magnifiers before buying.
- Approximately 4 diopters per Power (X), i.e.: a 10 diopter magnifier- 2.5X

### **Stand Magnifiers:**

- Set focal point; may be directly on page, with or without "legs."
- May or may not be illuminated (LED, incandescent, or halogen, if illuminated).
- More for reading than writing.
- \$20 to \$180, depending on illumination, magnification power, and brand.

### **Hand-Held Magnifiers:**

- Easier to use when writing.
- May be illuminated (LED or incandescent).
- May be tinted (yellow or orange).
- \$5 to \$75, depending on illumination, magnification power, and brand.

### **Pocket Magnifiers:**

- Easier to use when writing, but not illuminated.
- Most portable of all magnifiers.
- May have multiple lenses; weaker powered without multiple lenses.
- \$5 to \$40, depending on magnification and brand name.

### **CCTV:**

- Electronic magnifiers that allow a magnified image to be shown on a monitor.
- Designed for reading. Available in color or black and white models.
- Expensive (\$1,500 to \$4,500).
- At high magnification, only a few letters may be visible on the monitor.

**Lighting:**

- Chromalux bulbs (warm) Halogen (expensive; warm).
- Fluorescent (cool).
- Incandescent (regular bulb).
- Magnifying lamps: ideal for spot reading and personal hygiene.
- When shopping, consider the cost of replacement bulbs.

**Hand-held Telescopes:**

- 2.5x-14x -the greater the magnification, the smaller the field of vision.  
\$30 to \$200.
- Made for distance reading or viewing.
- For close up, such as reading price tags, use a “short focus” telescope.

## **Appendix F: Diabetes Resources**

Note: Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services does not endorse any company.

CCS Medical	1-800-258-9559
MP Total Care	1-800-678-5733
Heritage Diabetic Supply, Inc	1-800-267-6509
Liberty Medical Supply	1-800-633-2001
National Diabetic Pharmacy	1-800-467-8546
Pharma Care Specialty Pharmacy	1-800-238-7828
Medicare	1-800-633-4227
American Diabetes Association	1-800-232-3472
National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse	301-654-3327
Texas Diabetes Council	512-458-7490
Eli Lilly Patient Assistance Program	1-800-545-6962
Novo Nordisk Inc	1-800-727-6500
National Federation of the Blind	410-659-9314
Directory of Prescription Drug Patient Assistance Programs P.O. Box 29075, Phoenix, AZ 85038	

## **Appendix G: Recreational Resources**

Note: Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services does not endorse any company and is not responsible for content on any Web site other than the DARS Web site.

### **Travel:**

- The Guided Tour, Elkins Park, PA: Travel for visually impaired persons. 215-782-1370.
- White Cane Tours, Evergreen Travel: Travel for visually impaired persons. 4114 198th SW, Suite #13, Lynnwood WA 98036-6742. 1-800-435-2288.
- Access-Able Travel Source: Resources for travel tours and travel agents for people with disabilities.

### **Computer and Board Games:**

- Accessible Computer Games: [www.gamesfortheblind.com](http://www.gamesfortheblind.com)
- American Printing House for the Blind: P. O. Box 6085, Louisville KY 40206. 1-800-223-1839.
- United States Braille Chess Association: 111-20 75th Rd., Apt. 5L, Forest Hills NY 11375. 718-275-2209.  
[www.crisscrosstech.com/usbca](http://www.crisscrosstech.com/usbca)
- American Blind Bowling Association: 315 N. Main St., Houston PA 15342. 724-745-5986.
- United States Blind Golf Association: 615-885-2952.  
[jvbaker@mindspring.com](mailto:jvbaker@mindspring.com), [www.blindgolf.com](http://www.blindgolf.com)

### **Sports:**

- American Blind Skiing Foundation: 163 Walnut St., Elmhurst IL 60126. [ABSF@absf.org](mailto:ABSF@absf.org), [www.absf.org](http://www.absf.org)
- Ski for Light (Cross Country): 1455 W. Lake St., Minneapolis MN 55408. 612-827-3232. [info@sfl.org](mailto:info@sfl.org), [www.sfl.org](http://www.sfl.org)
- Foresight Ski Guides, Inc.: P.O. Box 18944, Denver CO 80218-0944. 866-860-0972. [foresightskiing@aol.com](mailto:foresightskiing@aol.com), [www.foresightskiing.org](http://www.foresightskiing.org)
- American Blind (Water) Skiers, Inc.: 2325 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica CA 90402. 213-828-5514.
- National Beep Baseball Association: 9623 Spencer Hwy., La Porte TX 77571. [info@nbba.org](mailto:info@nbba.org), [www.nbba.org](http://www.nbba.org)
- Goalball: 330-745-7853.  
[www.usaba.org/Pages/sportsinformation/adaptations/goalballadapt.html](http://www.usaba.org/Pages/sportsinformation/adaptations/goalballadapt.html)

### **Amateur Radio:**

Handiham – Ham Radio for People with Disabilities:

[handiham.blogspot.com](http://handiham.blogspot.com)

### **Music, Videos, and Theater**

- Refer also to Appendix D for retailers and Web sites for descriptive video and large print sheet music.
- Music by Ear: Music instruction in audible format. 704 Habersham Rd., Valdosta GA 31602. 229-249-0628. [www.musicvi.com](http://www.musicvi.com)
- Access Austin Arts, Inc.: Audio description of live concerts. 512-499-0255.

### **Recreational Equipment Resources**

- BSN Sports: P.O. Box 7726, Dallas TX 75209. 1-800-527-7510.
- Clotilde: Sewing and crafts. B3000, Louisiana MO 63353. 1-800-772-2891.
- Hammat Senior Products: P.O. Box 727, Mount Vernon WA 98273. 206-428-5850.
- Howe Press: Perkins School for the Blind, 175 N. Beacon St., Watertown MA 02172-9982. 617-924-3490.
- LILLY: Macramé and weaving supplies. P.O. Box 88, Shelby NC 28150.
- Lion Brand Yarn: Knitting and weaving supplies, accessible patterns. [www.lionbrand.com](http://www.lionbrand.com)
- Pickett Enterprises: P.O. Box 68, Prescott AZ 86302.
- Sportime, Division of Select Service and Supply Co.: 2905 E. Amwiler Rd., Atlanta GA 30360. 1-800-241-9884.
- SAX: Assorted crafts and magnifiers. P.O. Box 2002, Milwaukee WI 53201.
- US Games: P.O. Box 117028, Carrollton TX 75011-7028. 1-800-327-0484.
- Wolverine Sports: 745 State Circle, Box 1941, Ann Arbor MI 48106. 1-800-521-2832.

## **Appendix H: Common Microsoft Windows Keyboard Hotkeys**

Note: These hotkeys may not work in all versions of Windows or in some applications.

### **Windows Navigation and Application Control**

Open start menu	Windows key
Close start menu	Windows key
Go to desktop	Windows key + D
Minimize all to taskbar	Windows key + M
Move to next program	Alt + Tab
Move to previous program	Alt + Shift + Tab
Exit application	Alt + F4
Open application system menu	Alt + Spacebar
Maximize application	Alt + Spacebar then X
Bring up the context menu of item	Shift + F10

### **Menus**

Activate menu	Alt key
Completely leave menu	Alt key
Open submenu	Enter or Right arrow
Move through menu	Arrow keys
Perform command in menu	Enter key
Quickly jump and perform command	Underlined letter
Exit current submenu	Esc key
Note: A menu has to be open to jump to a command	

### **Dialog Boxes**

Move to next object	Tab key
Move to previous object	Shift + Tab key
Move to next page tab	Ctrl + Tab key
Move to previous page tab	Ctrl + Shift + Tab key
Activate button	Spacebar
Check/uncheck check box	Spacebar
Navigate to prior/next radio button	Up or Down arrow
Navigate in list or combo box	Up or Down arrow
Move up or down a slider bar	Arrow keys
Exit dialog box	Esc key

## **File/folder Management**

Copy file/folder	Ctrl + C
Cut file/folder	Ctrl + X
Paste file/folder	Ctrl + V
Rename file/folder	F2
Find file/folder	F3
Refresh contents	F5
Delete file/folder	Del key
Delete file/folder (bypass recycle bin)	Shift + Del key
Selecting files/folders together	Shift + Arrow keys
Selecting files/folders not together	Ctrl + Spacebar
Bring up file/folder properties	Alt + Enter

Note: when selecting files/folders that are not together, hold down the Ctrl key when moving from file to file.

## **Internet Explorer**

Accessing the address bar	Alt + D
Go to next Web link	Tab
Go to previous Web link	Shift + Tab
Go to next page	Alt + Right arrow
Go to previous page	Alt + Left arrow
Activate link	Enter
Stop Web page loading	Esc
Move down one screen	Page down
Move up one screen	Page up
Search internet	F3
Open new Web address	Ctrl + O
Print Web page	Ctrl + P

## **Font Formatting**

Bold text or selection	Ctrl + B
Italicize text or selection	Ctrl + I
Underline text or selection	Ctrl + U
Change font	Ctrl + Shift + F
Change font size	Ctrl + Shift + P
Increase font size by one point	Ctrl + Shift + >
Decrease font size by one point	Ctrl + Shift + <
Remove all font formatting	Ctrl + Spacebar

## **Paragraph Formatting**

Center paragraph or selection	Ctrl + E
Right align paragraph or selection	Ctrl + R
Left align paragraph or selection	Ctrl + L
Justify paragraph or selection	Ctrl + J
Double space paragraph or selection	Ctrl + 2
1.5 spacing for paragraph	Ctrl + 5
Single space paragraph or selection	Ctrl + 1
Indent paragraph half an inch	Ctrl + M
Change paragraph to hanging indent	Ctrl + T
Remove all paragraph formatting	Ctrl + Q

## **Document Navigation**

Go to top of document	Ctrl + Home
Go to bottom of document	Ctrl + End
Move to beginning of line	Home
Move to end of line	End
Move down one screen	Page Down
Move up one screen	Page Up
Move to next page	Ctrl + Page Down
Move to previous page	Ctrl + Page Up
Go to a page, section, or bookmark	Ctrl + G

## **Document Editing**

Copy selected text	Ctrl + C
Cut selected text	Ctrl + X
Paste selected text	Ctrl + V
Select whole document	Ctrl + A
Delete text or selection	Del key
Delete letter to left of cursor	Backspace
Delete letter to right of cursor	Del
Find a word or phrase	Ctrl + F
Replace a word or phrase	Ctrl + H

Note: To select a letter, word, line, paragraph, or page, hold down the shift key plus the navigation keys listed in the document navigation section.

## **Document Management**

Open a document	Ctrl + O
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Close a document	Ctrl + F4
Create new document	Ctrl + N
Save a document	Ctrl + S
Save document with another name	F12
Print a document	Ctrl + P

**General**

Run spell checker	F7
List suggested correct word	Alt + F7
Run thesaurus	Shift + F7
Undo last action	Ctrl + Z
Redo last action	Ctrl + Y
Insert page break	Ctrl + Enter
Insert hyperlink	Ctrl + K

## **Appendix I: Assistive Technology Web sites**

Use the following links as starting points. This is not an inclusive list of companies. Note: Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services does not endorse any company and is not responsible for content on any Web site other than the DARS Web site.

[www.blindsoftware.com](http://www.blindsoftware.com)

Downloadable shareware, freeware, and demos.

[www.aisquared.com](http://www.aisquared.com)

Downloadable Zoomtext product demo.

[www.gwmicro.com](http://www.gwmicro.com)

Downloadable Window Eyes product demo.

[www.freedomscientific.com](http://www.freedomscientific.com)

Downloadable JAWS and Magic product demo.

[www.telesensory.com](http://www.telesensory.com)

CCTV and low vision products.

[www.dolphincomputeraccess.com](http://www.dolphincomputeraccess.com)

Downloadable product demos for Hal, Super Nova, and Lunar screen readers.

[www.abledata.com](http://www.abledata.com)

Blindness and low vision resource.

[www.pulsedata.com](http://www.pulsedata.com)

Pulse Data and VisuAide merged to form the HumanWare Group to offer a variety of assistive technology devices.