

Ph 1800 033 660 | E bca@bca.org.au | W [bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au/) | ABN 90 006 985 226

# Life Hacks for People who are Blind or Vision Impaired

At BCA Connect 2022, a number of board directors, staff, and members shared their best life hacks that make day-to-day life a bit easier for people who are blind or vision impaired. We’ve compiled them all below.

“Disability specific products come and go from the marketplace, especially if produced by start-ups or small companies. Innovative mainstream consumer products likewise come and go, because they often flop once the novelty and marketing hype has gone off the boil. So, if you find something useful, buy it in bulk!” - **David, BCA Member**

“I would like to let everyone know about a device that I have that helps me make coffee and hot chocolate. It is called a water dispenser. You fill up the tank with water, then press a button at the front of the machine, and it heats the water and pours it out into your cup. You can buy them at Harvey Norman.” - **Natasha, BCA Member**

“I have a coffee cup that plays a sound when water gets close to the top. You can also get lids to put on cans to change into a bottle top.” - **Kristy, BCA Member**

“I have learned a handy trick to prevent spilling when cutting open bags, such as a new bag of sugar or frozen vegetables. Hold the bag upright, open the top drawer under the kitchen bench and set the bag in the drawer, then close the drawer, securing the bag between the benchtop and the drawer. This frees your hands to grab the scissors and cut open the bag. You can then scoop from the bag or gently grab the bag and pour as needed. I also have more than one cat and have different textured collars so that I can easily tell which cat is which. The collars also have different sounding bells so I know which one is nearby.” - **Katrina, BCA Member**

“I use special clips to secure my tea bag to my coffee mug when heating water in the microwave so the tea bag does not fall in. I also use a Telstra Easy Call phone and Victor screen reader.” - **Kathy, BCA Member**

“Sometimes in a crowded place like a Doctor's office, I don't want anyone around me to hear my screen reader playback, so I use the Braille display on a Braille Sense Polaris Mini. No one can see what I'm browsing and I don't lose any privacy. At home, I use a nicer dicer like gadget to chop my vegies. Quick and no need to use a knife. I also have a special water dispenser instead of a kettle with buttons to control water temperature and volume.” - **Iris, BCA Member**

“Using a steam mop. I purchased an empty sauce bottle that you can get from Coles with a spout, fill up with water and secure the lid, point the spout of the sauce bottle down into the water tank hole of the steam mop and squeeze the water into the tank. This also works when wanting to fill up soap dispenser with a refill. Much easier to fill up the wider neck sauce bottle and squirt into the soap dispenser. I also find that keeping a pot lid turned up prevents the condensation and water from spilling onto the floor when I want to stir what's inside.” - **Tiffy, BCA Member**

“I use a vegetable peeler for much more than just peeling vegetables, e.g., I use it to shred a block of cheese. I also use an ice cream scoop for perfect mounds of mash potatoes and for scooping out casseroles and other things.” - **Jan, BCA Member**

“I always use a travel mug with a lid for hot cups of tea to prevent spilling. I also have an assortment of brightly coloured chopping boards that give good contrast against my dark benchtops and the vegetables I'm chopping.” - **Chelsea, BCA Member**

“I have a couple of laundry hacks. First, I decant fabric softener into a pop top drink bottle for easy pouring into the machine. I also iron my clothes using a garment steamer instead of an iron. The clothes hang upright and I can steam every side and can feel the fabric for smoothness as I go.” - **Tristan, BCA Member**

“I have trouble eating long spaghetti so I break up the pasta into smaller pieces before putting in the pot. I also tie strings to my wheelie bins so I can quickly identify which bins are mine and I have a different number of strings to tell which bin is for what.” - **Janine, BCA Member**

“When I travel, I use packing cubes that you can get from Amazon. They come in different sizes and have a compression zip. I can fit 3-4 changes of clothes in a backpack, with everything neatly sorted and no need to check any luggage. I also us Apple Air Tags, not only to identify my bags if I need to, but also to find my room at the hotel if I get disoriented or lost on my floor. I also secure the loop of my cane to my belt loop when I need to keep my hands free.” - **Jamal, BCA Member**

“I use a slightly thicker cane with a ball for depth perception. It is useful to open drawers too.” - **Nidhi, BCA member**

“I use my cane to get things from under my bed. I also use dishwashing and washing machine detergent pods so that I do not have to worry about measuring out detergent.” - **Elliot, BCA Member**

“I use a cane clip on my belt loop which has a magnet so your cane can stand upright beside you, keeping your hands free at meetings or social gatherings when holding a cup of tea or plate of food. You can get them from Vision Australia or Guide Dogs.” - **Susan, BCA Member**

“Being prepared and organised when attending face to face meetings, e.g., arriving early, knowing where the toilets are located, sitting in a chair with back to a window to stop glare, taking note as other people arrive, including their names and where they sit in the room or at the table.” - **Doug, BCA Board Director**

“Use of adhesive sticky dots made of rubber with adhesive backing to label items for quick identification and use, e.g., keyboard orientation of the shift key, on the shampoo bottle to differentiate from the conditioner bottle. Can be used for a variety of applications and handy to keep a pack in bag for when needed. I blend up large vegetables like sweet potatoes and others that are difficult to cut in a blender. Quick to process and removes the risk of using a sharp knife.” - **Helen, BCA Board Director**

“It is my responsibility to lock down the house at night, including closing the holland blinds. I find placing my foot under the blind stops the blind at the perfect height for my floor to ceiling windows.” - Stephen, **BCA Board Director**

“When catching public transport, I get my kids to look and tell me the bus numbers. I also kept close to my kids and if that meant getting in the pool or playing on the playground with them then that’s what I did. A lot of parents sit on the side and miss out on so much interaction, as well as wouldn't know if something went wrong. In the home, I can’t see if I’m getting things up with the vacuum or mop, so I very systematically move from one side to the other, up and down. I also recommend having your pantry/fridge/cupboards well organised so that you know the general idea of where items are and hope to heaven that your fellow house dwellers don’t move them.” – **Sam, BCA Staff Member**

“As my son and I both have a vision impaired, when we would go to large events together I would dress us both in a bright colour so it was easier to locate each other. If I’m unsure of the street / road that I’m on, I use ‘Ask Siri, where am I’. I always use speech to text for all my notes on my iPhone: food shopping lists, housework to do lists etc. I do the same with text messages, but I think may do this too. I use certain coat handers for outfits: black for evening wear, and white tor day. I also pre-set some outfits: top, scarf, and place the earnings in a soft cloth bag over the hanger. I use two laundry baskets: a blue one for dirty, and a white one for clean.” - Deb, **BCA Staff Member**

“When making my bed, I have safety pins in the corners of the quilt inner that need to be at the foot of the bed. This helps me know where the buttons of the cover need to go so that everything is lined up and doesn’t bunch. I also hang my clothes in the shower and let the steam get the wrinkles out - saves time and effort! I have bought myself a reusable metal straw which folds together like a cane. I have cable tied its case to my Guide dog treat bag so I always have a straw wherever I am. Kathmandu sells coming gear, raincoats and bags that fold up inside their own sleeve. This is handy as a space saver and keeps everything I need neatly in my backpack. I worked out that on my local train line, every platform 1 is on the north side of every station concourse. This always gives me a point of orientation to know where I am in relation to the rest of the train stations. I always have a slimline 6 segment cane on my hip or in a bag. Folds up much smaller than traditional canes and is a great back-up.” - Conor, **BCA Staff Member**

“An important tip for everyone who stores important numbers and contacts on an electronic device is to have a second device with the same information in case of an emergency or when the device goes flat.” - Jennifer, **BCA Staff Member**

“I use bright luggage tags with a textured fabric for easy identification of my bags. I recently discovered a great hack from a friend who had their cane attached to the wall near the front door to keep it out of the way and in a handy spot in an emergency. I also keep a small torch attached to my cane facing down to light my path if needed.” - Jane, **BCA Staff Member**