

# You Can Work with Blindness or Low Vision

## A Quick Guide to Maintaining or Gaining a Job with Vision Loss

If you have recently lost some or all of your vision and are employed, **do not quit your job!** If you are blind or have low vision and are unemployed, **you can find a job!**

Every day, thousands of individuals with visual impairments go to work and make valuable contributions to their communities. With the appropriate training and tools, you can too!

This guide will introduce you to services, resources, and tools that can guide you to independence and achieving your employment goals. In other words, you will discover that “You Can Work with Blindness or Low Vision!”

### **Vocational Rehabilitation**

Work can have a profound impact on your self-esteem, finances, independence, and overall quality of life. Vocational rehabilitation services help people with disabilities maintain or gain employment. These services are tailored to your individual goals, abilities, and needs. If you have recently experienced a vision loss and are interested in keeping your current job or finding a job, vocational rehabilitation is the best place to start.

Every state has a vocational rehabilitation program. For people with visual impairments who are seeking employment and independence, your state’s vocational rehabilitation agency is a great place to identify and obtain services and resources. They can help with many of the topics discussed below. You can find the contact information for the vocational rehabilitation office in your state through this [link](#).

### **Transferable Skills**

With recent vision loss, the way you do things may change, but it does not change the skills and abilities you have to offer an employer or your ability to learn new skills. Many of the skills you have gained through previous work, training, and life experiences can be applied to future jobs. These are called transferrable skills and can include communication, time management, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership abilities. Skills

such as word processing and editing, public speaking, contract management, operating machines, woodworking, and sales can also be performed after vision loss.

### **Assistive Technologies and Devices**

Assistive technologies and devices (AT) aid people with visual impairments with performing work and other activities. AT includes technology that makes words and objects appear larger and devices that convert print to audio. General technologies, such as smartphones and computers, have built-in software and apps that act as assistive aids. There are many technologies and devices that make it possible for individuals who are blind or have low vision to complete work tasks.

Each state has an Assistive Technology Act Program (ATAP) that provides persons with disabilities the opportunity to learn about devices, try them out before purchasing, and obtain refurbished devices. More information about ATAP programs can be found on [their website](#).

### **Getting Around Independently**

Getting from point A to point B is essential to being independent and reaching your career goals. Training in orientation and mobility will help you gain the skills to know where you are in relation to where you want to be. [Orientation and Mobility](#) specialists teach people with vision loss to use all senses to move about safely in various environments. Whether walking through a building or crossing a busy street, you can travel with confidence if you have the proper training.

Lack of transportation can be a challenge to employment, but there are solutions. The National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University developed a transportation guide specifically for persons with visual impairments. Access it [here](#) to explore your transportation options.

### **Essential Living Skills**

You may find it difficult to prepare food, manage your money, put on makeup, organize your medications, and perform household chores. Vision loss should not keep you from performing these and other daily living skills. There are many resources available to help you to perform these activities with little or no vision. Some can be found on [this website](#).

## **Social Security Work Incentives**

If you receive Social Security benefits, you may be able to keep them for a specified period after you begin working. This allows you time to adjust to working with a visual impairment and ensure that the job is a good fit for you, without jeopardizing your benefits. The Social Security Administration (SSA) offers support throughout the job preparation process. More information can be found on [SSA's website](#).

## **Americans with Disabilities Act**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits employers with 15 or more employees from discriminating against qualified persons with disabilities regarding job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. It also requires that employers make reasonable accommodations for disabilities that do not cause undue hardship.

Examples of accommodations that can be made for persons with visual impairments are purchasing assistive technology, modifying equipment or lighting, and making the workspace easier to navigate. Large screen monitors, enhanced lighting, and devices with speech may make it possible for you to continue to complete your routine job duties. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a useful resource for guidance on job accommodations. For more information, visit [JAN's website](#).

## **Quotes from successfully employed people with vision loss**

*Denna Lambert*

My vision loss may be defined by what I can or cannot see on an eye chart, but my potential and ability to thrive is boundless. Blindness does not define my life's boundaries. Keeping high expectations for myself and adapting to changing environments has helped me to grow as an individual, a professional, and as a mom. A positive personal outlook keeps blindness to just a characteristic rather than a barrier. As a NASA Project Manager, using the learned skill of adaptability has helped me to lead my team to federal awards and successful mission completion.

*Maxwell Ivey*

I am an online media publicist. What that means is I help creative entrepreneurs gain exposure for their work by connecting them with online opportunities such as podcast and radio show interviews, online magazine articles, news article contributions, virtual summits, book collaborations, etc.

I help people use these platforms to share their stories, reach new audiences, and grow their passion. I help them refine their story and prepare to be interviewed. And I show them how to powerfully tell their story so that hosts find them irresistible. I then help them promote their interviews and other work on social media and to my email list.

My message is, no one can be educated, inspired, or uplifted by your story if they never hear it. And please don't wait until you think your story is good enough to start sharing it.

*Stephen Podley*

My title is telecommunications superintendent for Miami International Airport. I am responsible for the management design and installation of various networks, security systems, communication equipment, and electronics systems.

Get all of the training you need to be at the top of your game and let nothing stand in your way!

For stories about other successfully employed blind people, see our [Meet Employees webpage](#).

**Resources**

- [Alliance of Aging and Vision Loss](#)
- [American Council of the Blind](#)
- [American Foundation for the Blind](#)
- [American Printing House](#)
- [Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs](#)
- [Hadley](#)
- [National Federation of the Blind](#)
- [National Industries for the Blind](#)
- [VisionAware](#)