



## Magnification and Traditional Magnifiers

One of the most common and important goals individuals with low vision often have is the ability to read again. Depending on the vision and the eye condition, this goal can be met by magnifying/enlarging the print making it easier to see. In this brochure we will discuss three types of traditional/optical magnifiers:

1. **Hand-held Magnifiers**
2. **Stand Magnifiers**
3. **Spectacle magnifiers**

People often have a misconception that the stronger the magnifier the better, which is not the case. The amount of magnification and the type of magnifier needed will depend on vision, environment and the task at hand. As magnification increases the field of view decreases and so does the working distance. A magnifier that works for one task won't always mean it will work for another. Knowing more about the types of magnifiers that are available can help individuals better understand the type of magnifier they need.

1. **Hand-Held Magnifiers** are the most common type of magnifiers due to the ease of use and portability. They can be used with or without glasses. Hand held magnifiers are available with illumination which can help significantly when needing to perform tasks in poorly lit environments like restaurants or stores. These types of magnifiers are convenient for **short-term "spotting" tasks** such as looking at labels, price tags, gauges, viewing dials or appliance controls. Hand-held magnifiers are difficult to use for prolonged viewing tasks as they require steady coordination to maintain focus and will not work if both hands are needed.
2. **Stand Magnifiers** rest directly on the surface of the reading material thus easier to use if there is history of poor coordination or tremors. Stand magnifiers are available with illumination as well and may be helpful for more fluent reading like magazines or ads in newspapers. Since the visual field is still limited while using a stand magnifier, the user must move the magnifier over the material to read the entire text
3. **Spectacle Magnifiers** are high powered glasses that are used for more prolonged near tasks like reading. Since they are worn on the face, spectacle magnifiers allow hands to be free for near tasks like crafting, holding a book, turning pages, writing, etc. High powered magnifying glasses have a short working distance when compared to conventional prescription glasses. This makes the wearer hold the reading material closer to the eyes than they typically would.



For more information on living with vision loss, contact  
Lighthouse Low Vision Services at: (206) 436-2154

OR

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