



LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY
OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Independent eating

For visually impaired/ blind person



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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Introduction

There are a variety of techniques and adaptive devices of both a low vision and non-visual nature in to help individuals to eat independently at home and in a restaurant.

To ensure that the meal remains pleasurable, the basic rules apply: good lighting, contrast between the dishes and the table, coasters, cutlery, dishes and condiments always placed in the same place.

There are a number of techniques that VIP must master to be able to engage in eating activities completely independently. This includes: identifying food on a plate, chopping food, pouring liquids, etc.

Finding a seat at the table

- **Locate the chair** by putting a hand on the backrest, check if it is occupied
- **Pull the chair and sit down**, control the position of the body in relation to the table and the covered.
- After sitting down, **familiarise yourself with the environment** by discreetly sliding hands on the surface of the table, and trying to find where the cutlery, plate, glass, salt shaker etc are located.

The EPIC Framework

The general strategy used to organise a treatment plan for eating activities includes 4 areas:

Environmental Modification,
Process Adaptation,
Introduction of Equipment,
Change of End-Product/ Task
Simplification

Environmental Modification

- Incorporate a portable task lamp (A).
- Place darker food on a light, non-patterned plate (B).
- Cover glossy table with matte-finished tablecloth.



(B)

Process Adaptation

Have food locations described according to clock positions or right/ left/ top/ bottom; consistent locations of foods on plate.

Clock positions can describe the location of food on the plate as well as location of utensils and other containers of food and beverages at the place setting and on the table in general.



Introduction of Equipment

- Use fork tines or tip of knife to tap around plate in an organised manner to determine locations of different foods.
- Use sectioned plate (A)
- Use scoop plate – with one raised edge (B)



Change of End Product/ Task Simplification

Select easier-to-detect version of food/ food group desired (carrot slices vs peas, fried egg on toast instead of fried egg with toast on the side).



The “locating technique”

Is used when a client desires to locate an item on the table in a discrete, careful manner without knocking items over.

This technique encourages the client to explore the tabletop in a deliberate and methodical manner by first locating the table edge in front of him or her.

The hands are curled slightly and are moved in a circular pattern away from the edge, locating objects with the backs of the fingers and skirting around others. [1]



- A. Sit perpendicular to edge of table
- B. Locate edge of plate using clued fingers
- C. Move hand forward, fingers curled, to locate cup
- D. Grasping cup with hand [1]

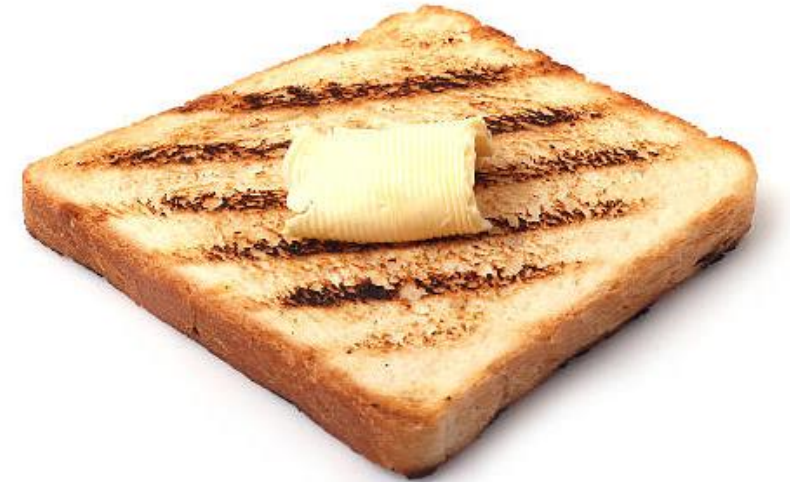
To return an item such as a saltshaker, butter dish or cup to the table, use one hand to locate a free space on the tabletop and the other hand to hold the item that you're returning to that space.

Keep your hand on the tabletop until the item has been placed back onto the table.

Spreads and condiments

Condiments such as butter can be placed in the centre of the bread and spread in an outward fashion or placed in the upper-right or upper-left corner of the bread and spread from top to bottom in an overlapping fashion.

The slickness of the bread as gauged by the knife indicates coverage. At home, the index finger, when placed under the rim of a salad dressing or Ketchup bottle, can detect the flow of condiment.



- When eating at home, the index finger, when placed under the rim of a salad dressing or Ketchup bottle, can detect the flow of condiment.
- Portion-controlled spouts can be purchased to place on containers with vinegar, oil, and other such liquids.
- In a restaurant setting, a client can ask to have such condiments in a small cup on the side. If the client desires to further limit the dressing on the salad, the fork can be dipped into the dressing before the lettuce is pierced.



Practice and attention to subtle cues are required to be able to gauge the presence and size of a piece of food on a utensil by noting its weight.

The client should discreetly feel the location of the food around the edge of the plate and move it toward the center of the plate.

This prevents food from slipping off the plate and allows the individual to more readily locate the remaining food.

Pouring liquids

There are a wide range of devices and techniques to accomplish the task of pouring hot and cold liquids.

Pouring can be enhanced by using **contrasting cups** and mugs (e.g., black coffee in a white mug).

Clear glassware should be avoided where possible.

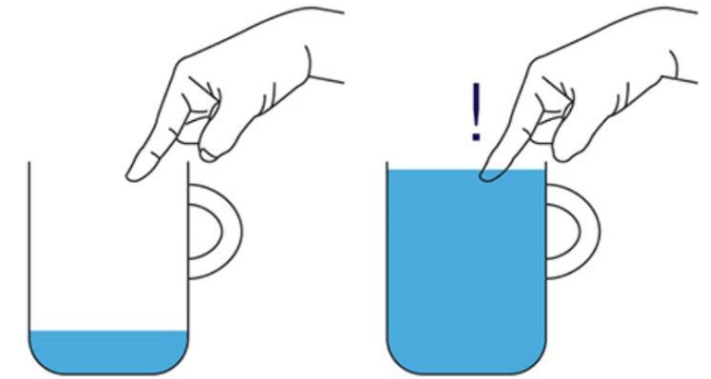


When the cup begins to be filled with water, the buoy connected to the cup's handle rises upwards gradually due to buoyancy.

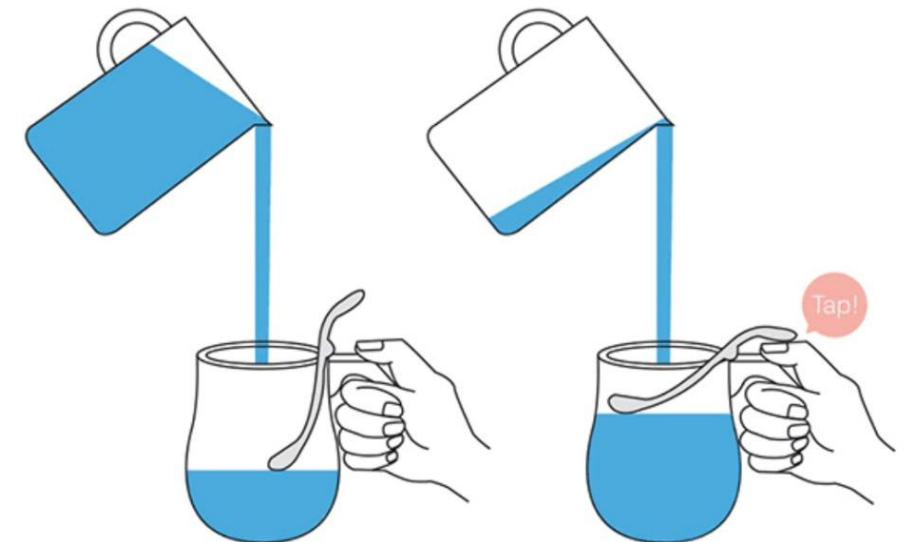
The rising buoy tells the volume of water by stimulating the thumb. Therefore, it helps blind people pour water into the cup, or fill a cup with water conveniently and sanitary to drink.



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How to use



A **fingertip inserted** just inside the rim of a cup with the second joint resting on the rim can be used to detect the height of the liquid being poured.

The same fingertip will locate and guide the spout (spout at 9 o'clock) when aligned with pitcher handle at 3 o'clock) to the center of the glass, with the spout touching the inside rim but not resting on it, while pouring.



One of the critical aspects of this pouring technique is to pour slowly to allow the fingertip sufficient time to detect the rising fluid.

With structured practice, a person can quickly learn to pour liquids by weight and feel in as few **as 10 to 20 trials** without vision.

When pouring, the client can attend to nonvisual cues, such as listening for sound changes as liquid reaches the top of the cup, as well as noting changes in **weight** and **temperature** on the side of the glass.



IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:

You can feel the heat only after 5 to 10 seconds, depending on the thickness of the mug: only glass and porcelain transmit the heat, other materials (like stoneware or earth ware) insulate it.

A “count” can be developed for a specific-sized glass.

Coloured ping pong balls and ice cubes float and can be used as a cue that the fluid has reached the desired level.

A drop of **syrup** will help to see the level (for visually impaired people).

Gradually you could recognise when the glass is almost full or guided by the sound (for blind people).



A product called a liquid level indicator (LLI) can be used to detect liquid level height.

This device is hung over the rim of the mug or glass with the prongs placed inside the rim of the cup.

The prongs emit a nonvisual cue (beep, music, vibration) when they detect hot or cold fluid.



Eating vegetables

Eating smaller vegetables or grains (e.g., chickpeas, buckwheat) can be scooped up by pushing the full utensil against a “*buffer*,” which could be the knife, mashed potatoes, or a piece of bread.

- Move the flat fork towards the knife to pick up vegetables.
- Regularly, return the vegetables to the center of the plate using the fork.

A high rimmed plate, a plate with sectional dividers or plate guard can be purchased and snapped onto the edge of the plate.

When eating vegetables that can be pierced with a fork (e.g., potatoes), the fork is held vertically down, the vegetable is pierced, the knife is held in front of the fork, in order to secure the vegetable.



Cutting food: meat

- To identify the shape and size of a piece of meat by using cutlery.
- Push a piece of meat to the 7 o'clock position on the plate (for left-handed - to the 5 o'clock).
- Slide the fork from the edge of the plate until it stops.
- Locate the edge of the meat with the knife and insert the fork tines pointing downward about 1 to 2.5 cm from the edge of the meat, and then slide the knife along the tines of the fork to guide the cut, creating a bite-sized piece.
- Cut the meat with the knife until you feel that it has been cut all the way through.
- For tender meat dishes, you can use only a fork, and with the help of a knife, place a piece on the fork.



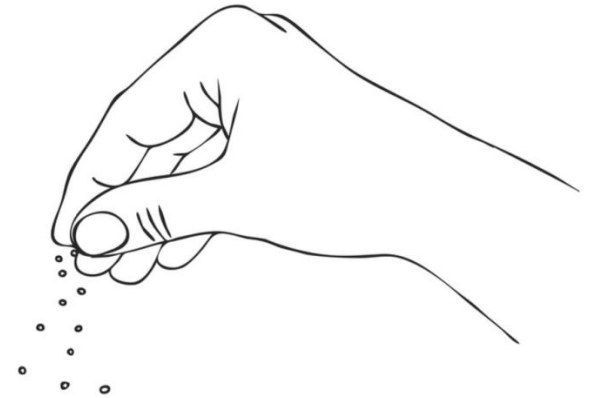
It is more convenient to eat meat and vegetables separately.

However, if you want to eat them together, you can serve the meat/fish by placing it according to the clock face system, for example fish at 7 o'clock, potatoes at 1 o'clock, vegetables at 4 and 6 o'clock.



Seasoning food

- Identify salt and pepper by weight or feel; salt is generally heavier and makes a looser, more granular sound when poured.
- Instead of shaking salt or pepper directly onto the meal, shake it into a palm, then take a pinch and sprinkle it to taste.
- Other condiments such as ketchup and mustard might be put to one side of the plate (for e.g., at 12 o'clock) or spread over the entire surface of the meat before cutting it.



Cutting fruits

- To cut an apple in half, place it on the table on the side where it will stand stably.
- Place the knife on top (in the middle) and press it down with your other hand on top to keep it stable.
- Once you have two halves of the apple, place the apple flat side down on the table.
- Take a knife, measure the thickness of the slices you want to cut with your index finger and thumb and cut with the knife.



The summary of several key nonvisual strategies:

- Using overlapping strokes to ensure that an area is entirely covered.
- Using a mental image of an object to know where one is and where one needs to be.
- Marking a location with the finger of one hand in order to bring a object to that location with the other hand.
- Counting or timing to determine the number of increments required to achieve the desired goal.
- Using the distance from the fingertip to the first joint as an indication of roughly 2.5 cm.
- Using a sighted observer to provide feedback that the technique used has achieved the desired outcome.
- Putting an object in a memorable place that has meaning to the client.
- Referring to clock positions to determine where an object is located.
- Additional common nonvisual strategies will be introduced in future chapters.

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