

Information on Cooking with Students That Have Visual Impairments

Work Your Appliances

It is often very difficult to see the dials on a stove and other appliances. There are products that can help. Bump (tactile) dots or 3D pens (also known as Hi-Mark pens) are durable and effective markers. Can also use plastic lace strips (cut into small pieces-available from St. Leo). This allows you to take it off easily once student finishes Foods Unit. You can mark stovetops or the oven dial at the point you use most. When using ovens, for example, 350 degrees is a common setting for baking. Place a mark above the dial then turn the knob until the mark on the dial matches the one on the stove.

Tactile dots can be placed on your stovetop controls to indicate settings.

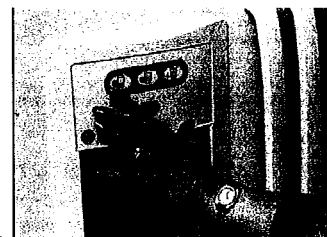


Mark all other appliances and appliance features you plan to use (refrigerator temperature and water and ice dispensers, dishwasher, microwave, etc.) Some microwaves come with a braille overlay or large-print labels that can be ordered from the manufacturer.

☺ Other ideas to identify the markings of the microwave, stove, refrigerator:

- ♥ Mark the dials with raised orange or clear stick-on dots.
- ♥ Use additional lighting in the form of a lamp or flashlight.
- ♥ Use a lighted hand magnifier or a stick on magnifier over these dials.
- ♥ Learn to listen or feel for the “clicks” of various settings

- ♥ Can use tactile, colored markings to identify markers.



Measuring

- ♥ Hold a light-colored measuring cup against a dark background when pouring water, flour, sugar, and other light-colored ingredients.

- ♥ You can find various measuring spoons and cups with large print, tactile, and contrasting labels to help you cook.



- ♥ Use a measuring cup with raised numbers on the side or mark the cup tactilely with a 3-D pen.
- ♥ Use individually sized or stacking measuring cups to scoop desired amounts.
- ♥ Measure spices into your hand first to avoid pouring into a spoon (some spice containers have a wide opening to insert a spoon), or use measuring spoons with large numbers.

Cutting and Chopping

- ♥ Remember to use plastic trays or cutting boards in colors that contrast with your food. For example, keep a white cutting board for slicing red apples or carrots, a dark colored board for onions, etc.



Use the white side of the cutting board for dark foods, and the black side for light foods.

- ♥ Try a pizza cutter instead of a knife for slicing sandwiches, or try an adjustable knife attached to a cutting board

Pouring

Cold Liquids

- ♥ There are many methods for pouring and draining. For large quantities, a nervous beginner may wish to dip with a cup or ladle; however, pouring from one container to another in the regular manner may be accomplished with some practice. You may keep one hand on the receiving container to keep track of its location. With practice, it is relatively easy to learn to judge the fullness of a container by sound and weight.
- ♥ If a tray or cookie sheet with raised edges is placed underneath the bowl while pouring and mixing, messiness and loss due to spillage can be minimized. A tray is also helpful for the same reason when carrying things that might spill--for example, a custard pie or gelatin dessert that has not yet set.
- ♥ Use color contrasts: Dark pitchers and servers for milk and other light-colored liquids, a white pitcher for dark liquids such as iced tea.

When pouring into a glass:

- ♥ Locate the pitcher by trailing your hand along the table.

Locate the spout by moving your hand up the pitcher, and then turn the pitcher until the spout faces the glass.



- ♥ When pouring liquid into a glass, your finger placed over the edge of the glass can serve as a guide to help you know when the glass is almost full.

- ♥ With your other hand, move the glass toward the pitcher, keeping your index finger on the spout of the pitcher.
- ♥ Lift the pitcher slightly and touch the spout to the rim of the glass.
- ♥ Now hook your index finger partway over the rim of the glass so that just your fingertip is inside the glass.
- ♥ Pour until you can feel the water or other liquid reach your index finger. Also, listen for sound changes as liquid reaches the top of the glass.
- ♥ Try practicing with empty containers first, and pour over a tray to catch any spills.

Hot Liquids

Pouring hot liquids can be dangerous. You may want to use a device "Say When" if child does not feel comfortable with pouring hot liquids. This battery-operated device that is placed at the top of a cup or glass and beeps when the liquid reaches the top. We have one of these available from St. Leo's on request.



E Z Fill Liquid Alarm

Peeling

- ♥ Use a vegetable peeler rather than a knife. Hold the fruit or vegetable in one hand; the peeler in the other.
- ♥ Grasp the handle with your thumb on one side and your fingers on the other. **Don't touch the moving rod inside the peeler.**
- ♥ Hold the item at a 45-degree angle and, working on one half of the fruit or vegetable, start to peel on the surface, away from your body. Once the peelings have been removed, check the section with your index finger to feel if it is smooth.
- ♥ Peel until the half you're working on is finished. Then turn the item upside down and continue.
- ♥ To determine whether you have any peel left, run cold water over the fruit or vegetable.

Placing Pans on a Burner

- ♥ Always position the pan correctly on the burner before turning the stove on.
- ♥ Always turn off the burner before removing the pan.
- ♥ Flat surface stoves can be a problem, but some have tactile contrast to indicate the burner (again, never turn on a burner until your pan is in position).
- ♥ Check the evenness of heat around the pan by holding your palm at chest level and circling your hand to determine the location of the heat source.
- ♥ You can check and adjust the position of the pan on the burner using a wooden spoon.
- ♥ Make sure the handles on the pots and pans and knobs on the lids are heat resistant.
- ♥ Make sure the handles are turned in when cooking so you will not accidentally bump or knock your pots and pans to the floor.

Baking

- ♥ Make sure the oven racks are positioned correctly before turning on the oven.
- ♥ Always turn off the heat before removing items from the oven.
- ♥ When removing items, pull the oven rack partially out rather than reaching into the oven. Remember to push the rack back in and close the oven door as soon as possible after placing the item on a counter or other surface.
- ♥ Use long oven mitts to remove items from the oven.



Long oven mitts protect hands and arms.

- ♥ Know where you are going to place the hot item before removing it from the oven.
- ♥ Oven doors that open down are safer than ones that open to the side.
- ♥ Always use an audible timer when baking.

Turning Foods

It is generally easier to use a double spatula as a turning device. Slide the item to the side of the pan, then slide the spatula underneath it. With the spatula, move the item to the center of the pan before flipping it over. Make sure you have one hand on the handle of the pan to prevent tipping.

A useful utensil- a safety food turner- Safety food turners are essentially two spatulas joined by tongs, but they offer greater control when handling hot food. All are inexpensive.

Spreading

- ♥ Practice with toast—it won't tear as easily as regular bread.
- ♥ With thick spreads like peanut butter or margarine, use an organized pattern to spread outward from a certain point—left to right, top to bottom, or center to outside.
- ♥ You can touch the food to make sure that spreading is complete.
- ♥ Some people find it easier to spread with the back of a spoon instead of a knife.

Adapting Cookbooks and Recipes

- ♥ Cookbooks are available in braille, large print, and recorded versions.
- ♥ If you have a computer and a printer, your own recipes can be typed and printed in as large a font as you need. Or they can be handwritten in large print with a bold line marker.
- ♥ Magnifying devices of all types can help.
- ♥ Sometimes a transparent yellow acetate overlay can make print easier to read.
- ♥ Recipes can also be recorded on a cassette tape or CD.

Useful Tools and Small Appliances

- ♥ There are many simple, inexpensive tools you may find helpful in the kitchen. Several are listed here—you can find information on all of these, and more, in the AFB [Product Search](#).
- ♥ long oven mitts
- ♥ kitchen timer with raised markings or large print
- ♥ liquid-level indicator
- ♥ safety food turner (double spatula)
- ♥ splatter shield
- ♥ cutting board with food chute for pouring
- ♥ cutting boards in light and dark colors to contrast with food
- ♥ color-coded or high-contrast measuring cups and spoons
- ♥ individual measuring cups and spoons (a must)
- ♥ large-print and broad handle measuring cup
- ♥ adjustable knife with a slice guide for adjusting slices
- ♥ A 3-D pen (or Hi Marks) for marking appliances
- ♥ card and bar code reader for creating labels that can be read back
- ♥ boil control disc to keep foods from boiling over
- ♥ tomato and vegetable slicer

Organize!

- Try to make sure every item is always put away after use in the same designated place.
- Get rid of clutter and dispose of seldom-used and expired items.
- Organize utensils in drawers with a method that makes sense to you (for example, forks on the left, spoons to the immediate right ...).
- Make sure knives are put in a separate location from other utensils.
- Put most frequently used pots and pans in a specific location such as on a pegboard within easy reach, or in a cupboard near the stove.
- Develop a system to organize foods on cupboard shelves and in the refrigerator so that every type of food has its designated place.

☺ Other tips.....

- ♥ In most situations no special equipment is necessary in cooking. All that is needed is to use your other senses well and learn a few techniques which will start you thinking about other ways that you can do things and will save you time. These are just a few suggestions about techniques. There is no one right way to accomplish these tasks. There are probably as many ways to do these things as there are people doing them. What is important is that blind people and family members understand that there are ways—generally very simple ways—of doing the things they want and need to do.

Here are a few other suggestions:

- ♥ It does not hurt food to touch it if your hands are clean.
- ♥ When pouring beverages, you may place your finger over the lip of the cup to tell when it is full, or after some experience you will be able to estimate the amount of liquid and can check this by lifting the cup or glass to see how heavy it is.
- ♥ You may want to do some of your mixing, such as for cookie dough, by hand. This way you can be sure that all of the ingredients are mixed thoroughly.
- ♥ You may use a combination of touch, cooking time, and your sense of smell to determine if something is done. A simple technique in dealing with hot food is to touch it with a paper towel over your fingers.
- ♥ You can turn the heat down under a skillet when you are turning meat in order to prevent grease from popping.
- ♥ Sets of metal measuring cups (one for each measurement) may be used for both dry and liquid ingredients.
- ♥ For measuring liquids by the teaspoonful, we suggest that you bend the measuring spoon so that the bowl is at a right angle to the handle; keep each liquid ingredient in a wide-mouthed jar, so that the bent spoon may simply be lowered into it and then lifted out full.
- ♥ If a recipe calls for a measured amount of boiling water, we suggest that you measure the water before heating it. If you use the water immediately when it begins to boil, the evaporation loss will not be significant.
- ♥ Oven and burner dials may be marked with tactile markings if they do not have obvious features such as clicks or notches. These may be marked for you by filing small notches, applying actual Braille dots or glue dots. You will not want to mark every temperature setting. Many cooks prefer to mark only two or three points which are most frequently used such as 350 degrees and 425 degrees. The same concept can be used for microwave dials, thermostat dials, and washer and dryer dials.
- ♥ Use an audible meat thermometer or use a thermometer with raised marks to test if meat is done. Time your cooking with a large print Kitchen timer.

- ♥ To avoid getting burned, get in the habit of shutting the burner off before removing food. Hold hand well above a burner to check if the burner is warm. Know the off position of the stove knobs.
- ♥ Do not wear loose clothes with long sleeves that could catch on fire.
- ♥ Turn pan handles inward from the stove or counter edge.
- ♥ Use Corel or plastic dishes if you are concerned about broken glass.
- ♥ Set a timer or turn on a light as a reminder that the stove or oven is on.
- ♥ Use oven mitts that cover the arm up to the elbow when removing food from the oven.
- ♥ To see if butter is melted..... stir the butter with a knife and feel for clumps.
- ♥ For grocery shopping, you may ask a clerk for assistance in finding items. You should have a list prepared before you go to the store, however, to save time for everyone. You may want to pick out your own fresh fruits and vegetables so you will get what you want.
- ♥ If you know Braille, you can label your canned goods with Braille. If not, you can separate your canned goods by location, by size, or by whatever other method may work for you.
- ♥ Braille, audio, and large print cookbooks are available. Check with your library for the blind about these. You may also want to record some of your own favorite recipes.

*Adapted from Irene Kovats