

BY JOYCE RENDER COHEN AND  
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# Low vision Alert

## Can you read this magazine?

**A**re you having difficulty reading this? I know how frustrating it is. Like some 50% of people with MS, I've had vision loss. For most, the loss is not permanent. But in my case, twenty years with numerous bouts of optic neuritis have left me completely blind in one eye and partially sighted in the other.

If reading regular print is hard, make an appointment with your neurologist or ophthalmologist for diagnosis and treatment. If you are facing a more or less permanent loss, ask to be referred to a **low vision rehabilitation specialist**. I've found this to be the single most helpful thing to do.

If large print helps you, you'll probably benefit from magnifying devices. While you can shop for yourself, a **low vision optometrist** will find the best ones for various needs. An OT, or **occupational therapist**, will help you learn ways to get the most from them. Call your chapter for referrals.

### Some tips for easier reading:

- Use task lamps to direct light on what you want to read. Use "full spectrum" light bulbs for better contrast and less glare.
- Explore contrast filters or tinted lenses. A low-vision optometrist can help with this.

### Can your computer help you read?

The computer can be an important low-vision aid! See "Three Routes to Easier Reading" on page 50.

My state's Services for the Visually Impaired sent a computer trainer to my home to instruct me in the magnifying program Zoom Text. The trainer also installed JAWS, which reads aloud what I have typed.

Every state has an agency for the blind and visually impaired. Don't be put off by the word "blind." Even if you have **some** sight, or visual problems that come and go, call them. You may find that your state will send someone to your home to help you identify your needs.

I'm a low-tech person, at heart, so the solution I like best is my student helper! Many schools have community service requirements, so you might get a volunteer if you can't pay someone.

### Other resources

■ The Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (888-657-7323; [www.loc.gov/nls](http://www.loc.gov/nls))

■ Lions Clubs International ([www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org) or your phone book for local listings) This volunteer agency pro-

vides reading aids and many other services for people with vision loss. Some clubs sponsor technology centers where people can use magnifying computers.

■ National Association for the Visually Handicapped (888-205-5951; [www.navh.org](http://www.navh.org))

■ American Foundation for the Blind (800-232-5463 or 212-502-7600; [www.AFB.org](http://www.AFB.org)) ■

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## Three routes to EASIER reading on screen

BY MICHAEL VITALE, WEB DEVELOPER FOR THE NATIONAL MS SOCIETY

### 1. Adjust your monitor for brightness and contrast.

■ Most monitors have keys for brightness directly under the screen. Others may have them on the keyboard.

■ If you're feeling more adventurous, go into your system settings and look for controls to change brightness and contrast. Don't be scared to try. You can always change it back.

### 2. Increase text size.

■ Some Web pages have a set of small, medium, and larger boxes, or a plus or minus sign, to increase text size.

■ Sometimes an icon called PAGE is in the tool bar offering zooming or text size adjustments. Text size changes remain if you print the document. Zooming changes usually do not.

### 3. Read the PDF versions.

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