Making tea with sight loss

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Boiling water and a china mug are a poor combination if you cannot see the level rising. The good news is that the problems are well understood and mostly solved, either with a few pounds of kit or by changing how the kitchen is arranged.

The three risky moments

1. **Filling the kettle**: hard to judge, and a heavy kettle is awkward.
2. **Pouring water into the cup**: the one that scalds people.
3. **Finding and identifying the right tea**: frustrating rather than dangerous, but it spoils the drink.

Solving the pour

A liquid level indicator hooks over the rim of the cup and beeps or vibrates when the liquid reaches it. RNIB's model has two levels, so you can stop short and leave room for milk. Practise with cold water first, and keep the electronics out of the water. RNIB liquid level indicator

A one-cup water dispenser is the other answer: you press a button and it delivers a measured cupful with no lifting and no pouring. For many people this is the single biggest improvement.

If you are pouring from a kettle, keep the cup in the same spot every time (a tray with raised edges, or a mat at a fixed place on the worktop) and use a kettle tipper so nothing has to be lifted.

Contrast and layout

RNIB's kitchen advice comes down to good lighting without glare, strong contrast, and things always being in the same place. RNIB: six ways to adapt your kitchen · RNIB: how do I make a cuppa?

For tea specifically:

- **A dark mug for milky tea, a pale mug for black tea**: the contrast makes the level visible for many people with some sight.
- **A light-coloured tray** under a dark kettle, or the reverse.
- **Task lighting** over the worktop, positioned so it does not shine into your eyes.
- **One fixed spot:** for the kettle, the tea, the mug and the spent-bag dish, agreed with everyone in the house.

Identifying the tea

- **Tactile labels**: bump-ons, elastic bands, or different-shaped containers for decaf and caffeinated.
- **Keep the box**, and mark it rather than decanting into anonymous jars.
- **Separate strongly scented teas**; you can often identify peppermint or chai by smell alone.
- **Single-ingredient teas** are easier to keep track of than a cupboard of similar blends.

Small changes that help

- **Fill the kettle to the minimum**, so it is light and boils faster.
- **Use a timer** (a talking timer or a phone) rather than watching the clock.
- **Lift the bag out with a spoon** and put it straight into a bowl kept in a fixed place.
- **Sit down to drink it.** Carrying a full mug is the other common accident; a trolley or a lidded travel mug solves it.

Getting an assessment

Equipment that suits one person does not suit another. An occupational therapist can look at your kitchen and recommend aids, often through your GP or local authority, and RNIB can advise on products and support. Ask before buying something expensive.

Our teaware essentials page covers ordinary kit, and one cup tea brewing suits a simple, low-risk routine.

Common questions

Are level indicators fiddly?
They take a little practice. Try them with cold water a few times and they become automatic.

Do I need a special kettle?
Not necessarily. A kettle tipper or a one-cup dispenser usually solves more than a new kettle.

What about loose leaf?
A basket infuser is easier than a strainer: it lifts straight out, with no pouring through anything.

Can I still use a teapot?
Yes, with a locking lid and a fixed pouring position. Many people find brewing in the mug simpler.

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