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## A Product (You Think) You'll Never Need

By [ERICA A. TAUB](#)



Compact Mini

For middle-aged healthy adults, it's disheartening the first time you realize you need reading glasses. Because once you do, you can no longer hide under the illusion that you're young.

Imagine, then, what it must be like when reading glasses no longer suffice, when macular degeneration, simple aging, or other conditions reduce your eyesight to a sliver of what it once was.

While a magnifying glass can help, [Optelec](#) has created a more advanced solution, a handheld digital camera that not only magnifies text and graphics, but displays them in a selection of text and background colors for easy reading.

The \$395 Optelec [Compact Mini](#) is about the size of a small entry-level global-positioning unit. By clicking a button, a user can view a printed page on its 3.5-inch LCD screen in one of three magnifications, with or without LED illumination. To help those who are unable to see all contrasts, objects can be displayed with one of several backgrounds and text colors, either standard black on white, or white on black, yellow on black, or yellow on blue. If the user can see an object only when it is close to his or her eyes, a still image "snapshot" can be taken and the screen then brought closer to the face.

While Optelec also makes large-sized displays for the vision impaired that cost up to \$3,000, the battery-operated Compact Mini is its first "affordable" product.

Hopefully, this is a product you'll never need. But you might know an elderly person who does.