

Tools to Grow

WHAT TO KNOW & HOW TO DEVELOP *Visual Perceptual Skills* PRESCHOOL-SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Dear Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers,

Visual Perception includes those skills needed to understand, evaluate, and interpret what is seen.

Just like other areas of development, the ability to successfully use your vision in a functional manner can be influenced by active experiences. In other words, in some cases parents and teachers may minimize future difficulties with visual perceptual and visual motor skills by involving their child in activities that are fun!

The Occupational Therapist provided this guide as a tool to learn which activities may benefit your child. The activities are organized into specific areas of visual perception. Offer your child an opportunity to participate in those activities that were checked by your child's Occupational Therapist.

It is important to have **FUN** with these activities by establishing a playful atmosphere during their use. The Occupational Therapist may have listed special instructions just for you and your child.

Enjoy giving your children the tools to help them grow!

Special Instructions:

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How to Develop Visual Perceptual Skills

PRESCHOOL-SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Visual Discrimination

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Visual discrimination is your child's ability to identify differences & similarities between colors, forms, shapes, patterns, and size.
- Visual discrimination allows a child to compare and distinguish one set of visual features from another.

DOES THE CHILD?

- Have difficulty detecting differences between symbols, pictures, letters, numbers, shapes, and/or words
- Confuse similar words or digits
- Have difficulty determining "where to cut" when using scissors to cut out designated shapes or pictures

TRY THIS!

- Sort- Start with one discrete difference, such as a difference in primary color. For example, place red objects in one box and yellow objects in a different box. Advance to more subtle differences, such as bright red vs. pale red.
- Match Objects- Start with real objects such as silverware, coins, buttons, or socks. Next move onto pictures such as those from a Memory game.
- Match Shapes- Start with simple geometric shapes. Advance to more complex parquetry patterns that require combining several shapes to make a whole.
- Use rubber bands to make shapes on a Geo board.
- Use craft sticks to form shapes.
- Use geometric shape stencils for tracing
- Match similar words such as SAW vs. WAS, DOG vs. GOD, WOW vs. MOM, ONE vs. ON, PAN vs. BAN
- Use a multi-sensory approach to writing letters and words to enhance possibility for recall. Write on a shaving cream or sand tray. Make letters with play dough/clay or craft sticks. Play a game to recognize or identify three dimensional letters by touch only.
- To assist with stroke formation when printing, reinforce child's knowledge of the basic components of each letter or digit. This includes big versus little lines, big versus little curves, and straight versus diagonal lines. Reinforce top versus bottom to help child understand start and end points for forming letters.
- Scissor Use- Highlight lines and borders to help a child determine where he/she is to cut when using scissors to cut out shapes or pictures.
- Scissor Use- Pre-cut the challenging angles and curves and allow child to use scissors to cut those areas that are more manageable.

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Form Constancy

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Form Constancy is the ability to identify or sort objects, shapes, symbols, letters, and/or words, despite differences in size or position.
- With form constancy the form is constant but the orientation changes.

DOES THE CHILD?

- Have trouble detecting letters, digits or symbols that are of different sizes, colors, or rotated.
- Have trouble distinguishing between similar letters (r/n, o/a) and words.
- Have trouble distinguishing between similar forms such as a circle/oval and square/rectangle
- Have difficulty recognizing words, letters, or numbers that are presented in a different font, writing style, or case (upper/lower).
- Struggle to recognize words presented in vertical form

TRY THIS!

- Provide a page from the newspaper or magazine. Child should highlight a specified letter, despite being printed in a different font, color, and/or size.
- Provide a page from the newspaper or magazine. Child should highlight a single digit, despite being printed in a different font, color, and or size.
- Sort like letters or words despite being printed in different font and/or size
- Ask your child to find a simple geometric shape within a room. For example, a picture frame may be a square, a dial on an oven/toaster may be a circle, and a place mat on the table may be a rectangle.
- Use vocabulary to help describe an object's shape, size or position when rotated.
- Play "I Spy" for shapes. For example: I Spy 5 items that are rectangular shape. This could be a door, table, book, ruler, and window.
- Use a multisensory approach. Touch and feel objects that are the same despite differences in texture, orientation, or size.

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Figure Ground

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Figure Ground is your child's ability to ability to perceive the foreground from the background in a visual presentation.
- Impairments in this area of visual perception may interfere with finding specific pictures, symbols, letters, numbers or words in a book, a map, a classroom board, or on other visual material.

DOES THE CHILD?

- Have a poor ability to quickly localize a specified word or sentence on a page
- Display confusion and fatigue quickly when looking at busy visual displays or pages
- Have difficulty copying from one source to another
- Have difficulty with hidden picture activities
- Have difficulty finding objects in a drawer

TRY THIS!

- Use "I Spy" or "Where's Waldo?" books, board games, and computer games.
- Tactile Bin-using touch the child finds small objects hidden within a container full of dry tactile materials (such as dry rice, beans, corn, confetti, etc.)
- Word Search games.
- Place a stuffed animal somewhere in cluttered room. Make sure a portion of the toy is visible. Challenge the child to find it.
- Minimize visual clutter in the classroom, child's desk, and bedroom. This will help compensate for a child with difficulties in figure ground skills.
- Find specified magnetic letter on a refrigerator full of magnets.
- Ask student to look around and retrieve specified items within the classroom or house. Decrease verbal prompts as child improves.
- When reading and/or copying, use the "cover it up" method. Child uses a paper to conceal all information except the sentence/math problem, section he/she is working on.
- Compensate for child by highlighting what is important on the page.

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Visual Memory & Visual Sequential Memory

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Visual Memory is the skill that requires a student to remember or recall items, numbers, objects, letters, figures, and/or words which have been previously seen.
- Visual Sequential Memory involves putting movements, sights, sounds, thoughts, objects, numbers or letters in consecutive order according to time and space.

DOES THE CHILD?

- Have difficulty recalling what was seen when copying from the board or a book; works slowly, omits content, or transposes letters
- Have difficulty with recalling phone numbers or addresses
- Write letters incorrectly
- Struggle with spelling words
- Have difficulty with remembering the order of the alphabet
- Forget steps in a task
- Have difficulty telling a story of events in the correct sequence

TRY THIS!

- Use "I Spy" or "Where's Waldo?" books, board games, and computer games. The child needs to recall what he/she is searching for.
- Tactile Bin-using touch the child finds small objects hidden within a container full of dry tactile materials. The child needs to recall what he/she is searching for.
- Dot to dot worksheets-start with easy patterns and advance to more complex.
- Re-create block, parquetry & bead patterns.
- Copy grid worksheets.

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Visual Memory & Visual Sequential Memory

TRY THIS!

- "What's Missing Game"- Show child a collection of objects then cover up; ask child to remember what he/she saw. If this is too challenging start by removing just one item. Child is to recall which one object is missing.
- Show child a collection of numbers, letters or pictures; ask child to remember what he/she saw.
- Show child a collection of objects, pictures, letters or numbers placed in a horizontal row; ask child to remember what he/she saw. Start with two or three items in a row, advance to five or six.
- Encourage your child to say out loud the collection of objects or spelling word he is to recall. That extra sound (auditory) input will help a child remember what he/she saw.
- Use what is known as a multi-sensory approach using the sense of touch. Help child recall letters by using their finger to trace sandpaper letters or print with their paper over a foam board. These tactile mediums provide extra sensory information to help a child remember.
- Play "Clothes Line Spelling":
 - Prepare individual index cards with each card containing one letter of a spelling word the child is still learning to master.
 - The child views the word printed on paper.
 - The child then uses clothespins to attach the letters to a clothesline in the correct sequence to re-spell the word.
- Play the "Look & Run" Game:
 - Prepare a set of matching words or letters on index cards.
 - Place one letter/word at one end, and a collection of letters or words at the other end (that also includes the special word/letter that is to be recalled); place them up to 10 feet apart.
 - Child views the specified letter or word.
 - Child then runs (or walks if needed) to find the matching letter/word (within a group of non-matching letters or words).

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Spatial Relations & Position in Space

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Spatial Relations is the ability to perceive two or more object's position in space relative to oneself and in relation to each other.
- Spatial Relations involves the ability to understand directions, reversals, and identify left and right on one's own body.
- Position in Space is the ability to perceive or judge an object's position relative to oneself and the direction in which it is turned.

DOES THE CHILD?

- Have difficulty relating objects to each other
- Struggle with spacing within and between words and organization of page
- Have difficulty writing on a line and within a given space
- Have difficulty with proper letter formation-form a circle in a clockwise rather than counter-clockwise manner
- Reverse letters-confuse b & d, p & q, W & M, 6 & 9, S & 3
- Have difficulty copying block, parquetry, and pegboard designs
- Have a poor ability to draw shapes
- Struggle with using maps, graphs, and grids
- Incorrectly store items in drawers and closets upside down, sideways, and/or inside out
- Show poor understanding of spatial terms (up, down, in front, behind, between, backwards, forward, left, right)
- Have difficulty with dressing-placing limbs into the correct sleeve or pant leg, struggle with arranging clothes inside out versus outside in

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Spatial Relations & Position in Space

TRY THIS!

- Place a red ribbon on child's right wrist to help with learning the difference between right & left side of their body.
- Provide support and supervision as child finds their way to specified location. Example: Provide written and verbal directions such as go up the stairs, turn right at the top of the stairs, turn left at the bedroom door, find gift on top of desk.
- Review strategies and implement steps for puzzle use. Example: 1) separate inside from outside pieces 2) find the corners 3) assemble outside "edge" first 4) assemble inside pieces. Rather than use trial and error, teach child to look at color and design clues and visualize where pieces belong.
- For printing practice highlight the lines on paper. For example: try yellow on the bottom horizontal line. Use red on right vertical border to alert child to the need to move down to the next line. Highlight the left vertical border with green to indicate where to start printing.
- Raised line paper is commercially available; it gives a tactile cue to help child know where to stop and start their pencil strokes.
- For printing practice, use grid paper to help a child visualize how to leave a little space between letters and more space between words.
- Use grid paper for math practice; will help child align digits in a vertical manner.
- For proper spacing between words, use yellow dots between words or use a craft stick as an aid to help determine where space between words belongs.
- Reinforce that the child needs to leave a finger space between words.
- Reinforce top versus bottom to help child understand start and end points for forming letters.
- Practice spatial sequences and patterns using snap blocks, beads, and cubes.
- Use geometric stencils and craft sticks to help child learn to create shapes.
- Complete numbered and un-numbered dot to dot activities.
- Play Simon Says game: For example "put your hands behind your back", "touch your right shoulder", "stand on your left foot".
- Play the Hokey Pokey game.
- Make an obstacle course with the child; use terms such as over, under, into, forward, backward, next to.
- To improve ability to color within specified borders, use raised line coloring sheets that are commercially available or highlight the borders with a bright marker.

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Visual Scanning & Tracking

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Visual Scanning is the ability to use vision to search in a systematic manner, such as top to bottom and left to right.
- A child needs to use visual scanning to avoid obstacles when navigating their environment. Smooth visual scanning is required for reading.
- Visual Tracking is defined as efficiently focusing on an object as it moves across a person's visual field. This skill is important for almost all daily activities, including reading, writing, drawing, and playing sports.

DOES THE CHILD?

- Lose their place while reading
- Inconsistently start reading at the top and left side of page
- Fatigue quickly when reading, writing, or viewing a computer screen
- Struggle with copying from the board or a book at his/her desk
- Have difficulty with ball handling skills; this includes catching, batting, and kicking a ball

TRY THIS!

- To compensate, cover up the portion of the paper or book the child does not need to view. Scanning may improve if there is less visual information on the page.
- Ball play—begin by using a large and colorful balloon to track. Gradually transition to smaller and quicker moving balls for catching, kicking, and batting.
- Provide a page from the newspaper or magazine. Child should circle or highlight a specified letter or digit. Be sure to work top to bottom and left to right.
- “Where is...?” To encourage searching with eyes, child is to scan a room to locate the specified objects.
- Provide word search activities.
- Use “I Spy” or “Where’s Waldo?” books, board games, and computer games to encourage searching with eyes.
- Compensate for difficulty with keeping eyes focused on relevant information by using a book marker or reading focus card. The child places the tool under or over the line he/she is to read.

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Visual Closure

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Visual Closure refers to the ability to identify forms or objects from incomplete presentations.
- Impairments in this area of visual perception may interfere with the child's ability to perceive the entire presentation of what is to be viewed and/or read.
- Deficits in visual closure may reduce reading speed because the child needs to slowly and carefully view each letter.
- Children with intact visual closure do not have to read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.

DOES THE CHILD?

- Show a poor ability to locate objects when only a portion is visible, such as two toys stored overlapping on a shelf or toy chest
- Does the child require extra time to recognize familiar words

TRY THIS!

- Match one letter or word to the same letter or word that is partially erased.
- Complete the picture-child draws in the missing part of an incomplete, yet recognizable shape, picture or symbol.
- Complete a connect the dots picture; encourage child to predict what picture will be revealed upon completion.
- Play the word game "Hang Man". Although the child may successfully guess one letter at a time, he/she needs to predict the full word.