



ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG CHILDREN TO USE THEIR VISION

Exposing your child to a range of activities and experiences will assist them in developing the most efficient use of their residual vision.

Before you do the following activities with your child, it is important that you have an understanding of their residual vision. This should be done through an orthoptic assessment, which will provide you with information about what size items your child can see, how close items need to be and what contrast and lighting requirements your child may have.

Some of the visual skills a child needs to develop include:

1. Visual perception – the ability to process visual information and make sense of it. Visual perception has several sub-components:

Visual discrimination	Ability to look at objects or pictures and recognise whether they are alike or different. This is important for matching and categorising.
Visual memory	Ability to remember, even for a short period, something you have seen
Visual closure	Ability to mentally visualise what something looks like, even if it is only partially visible, eg child can visualise what the whole pencil looks like even if it is half covered by the pencil case
Visual figure ground	Ability to distinguish an object/figure from its background, eg finding a particular toy in the toy box, finding your spot on the page or on the blackboard
Form constancy	Ability to recognise forms and objects as the same, regardless of size, colour or orientation, eg child can recognise a triangle regardless of which way it is turned, how big it is or what colour it is

Position in space	Ability to recognise the spatial relationship between yourself and objects in the environment, as well as relationship between objects. This is important for directional language concepts such as up and down; in front of and behind; between, left and right
Depth perception	Ability to judge how far away something is from yourself or another object, eg judging the depth of stairs when walking up or down

2. Tracking (following an object with the eyes) – this involves focusing the eyes on one point and moving them rhythmically from side to side, up and down, and diagonally.

3. Scanning - looking for details from left to right, top to bottom

4. Visual motor integration – ability to coordinate vision with the movements of the body, or parts of the body eg eye hand coordination

Many activities encourage the development of these visual skills. Each activity can focus on a several different skills depending on the activity provided. For example, a lotto game may focus on visual discrimination skills only, if played as a matching game. When the lotto cards are placed face down, visual memory is also required before completing the lotto game. For the purposes of this article they are listed separately.

Below are suggested activities for developing visual skills and hopefully more efficient use of remaining vision.

VISUAL PERCEPTION ACTIVITIES

- Matching, sorting and labelling activities based on colour, shape, size, texture, function, etc.
- Sorting and labelling pictures.
- Picture matching games, e.g. Lotto, Snap, Dominoes. A wide variety is available commercially, or you could design your own.
- Matching object to outlines drawn.
- Pattern making using pegboard or threading beads
- Visual Closure cards. Show dotted outline or half a picture.

- Pictures requiring the child to find "What's Wrong".
- "Spot the Difference" between two pictures. Start with simple pictures.
- Picture sequencing using simple sequences of daily life.
- Memory games using a small selection of picture cards, and finding pairs
- Memory games where beads, pegs or cards are placed in a colour pattern and then covered. The child tries to remember and copy the pattern (start with 4 items).
- "Traffic Lights": 3 large cards; red = sit, green = run, amber = stand. Use the same idea for movement with shape card such as a circle = hop, a square = jump, a triangle = crouch, etc.
- "What's missing" - present 2, 3, 4 or 5 objects, cover and take one or more away.
- "What's Been Added" - as above but **add** new object(s).
- "What Did You See" - show 2, 3, 4 or 5 objects for ten seconds, cover and the child recalls what has been seen.
- "Blanket Game" - using a small group of children (5), cover one child with a blanket while the children close their eyes. One child guesses who is missing.
- "I Touch My ___ ___ and ___". The children watch actions first and copy the teacher.
- Memory Lotto - played as for normal lotto except cards are placed face down and children must recall where their cards are.
- "Which One Is It" - show a picture card for several seconds. Uncover a group of objects and the child finds the object to match the card that was shown.
- "Find it" games, where a segment of a small picture must be found within a large scene

TRACKING ACTIVITIES

- Blow bubbles and the child watches and "snaps" with their hands.
- Torch Tag, where two children each have a torch and follow the beam of one flash light from one place to another with the other torch tracking the first.
- Visually track a ball as it is rolled down a slope, across grass, over a
 - table or down a slide. Count till the ball stops or catch it as it stops.
 - Use a large beach ball (slow) or a tennis ball (fast)

- As above, using a hoop.
- "Shadows" - watch partner's shadow and try to tread on it as it moves.
- Blow ping-pong balls with a straw.
- Track coloured water travelling through clear PVC tubing as it is syphoned from a water trough into a bucket.
- Bouncing balloons up in the air, the aim is to keep them off the carpet.
- Children make parachutes and watch them drop from a playground fort.
- Child kicks a ball as it is rolled towards them.
- Rolling a ball up a slide, watch it return and catch it.
- Batting a ball, or wine case insert suspended in a doorway.
- There are lots of commercially made toys that involve tracking little "men", balls, cars, etc. down a slope.

SCANNING ACTIVITIES

Children with vision impairments may also need to be taught how to scan a page, picture, room or larger area for details or objects. They may need to be taught how to do this in a methodical way starting at the left and moving to the right.

- Looking at picture book, ask the child to find a detail. Vary the size of the object and contrast of the background commencing with things you are sure they can see.
- Use the skill of scanning for details on puzzle pieces to complete the puzzle. Look at the puzzle first and note details.
- Use commercial games to scan for a card showing a portion of the larger picture.
- Hide objects around the playground or playroom and ask the child to find them. Vary the size and degree of contrast to the background.

VISUAL MOTOR INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

This would, of course include sand play, water play, construction kits and most gross and fine motor activities. Other ideas include:

- Throwing beanbags through hoops or into hoops lying on the ground.

- Throwing balls at a chalk face drawn on the wall.
- Threading beads or collage e.g. straws, pasta, bottle tops, etc. Gradually reduce the size of the hole and the thickness of thread.
- Pegboards, mosaics and pinching pegs onto ice-cream containers or hanging up paintings.
- Cutting and pasting activities. Provide thick texta lines if cutting along a line.
- Sewing and weaving activities.
- Try varying games with dough, eg use scissors, garlic crusher, spatula, icing piping bag or teabag tongs to pick up small balls of dough.
- Dot-to-dot exercises with very simple pictures.
- Drawing with textas, charcoal, pencils with dark lead.
- Playing skittles with empty milk cartons, plastic juice bottles or commercially made games.
- Catching and throwing balls. Throwing balls through a tunnel or through a friend's legs, throwing balls into a bin nailed to the fence.
- Puzzles, games and manipulative activities.
- Hammering activities both commercial varieties as well as when doing woodwork.
- Painting at the easel, straw blowing painting, painting with cotton buds, sponge rollers, etc.
- Nuts and bolts, screwing lids on containers, and as part of a construction set.
- Using walk boards; on the ground, raised, sloping or with objects for the child to step over, carry or pick up.
- Climbing activities using ladders, slides, stairs, trestles etc.
- Printing with fingers, hands, feet and a variety of objects

It is important to remember that each child's success with these activities will depend on their level of **vision**, their previous **experiences**, level of **motivation** and level of **cognitive** function.

It is hoped these suggestions will stimulate further ideas to identify many activities occurring daily that can assist the child in using their remaining vision as efficiently as possible and develop the visual skills which they need for school, mobility and

future independence.