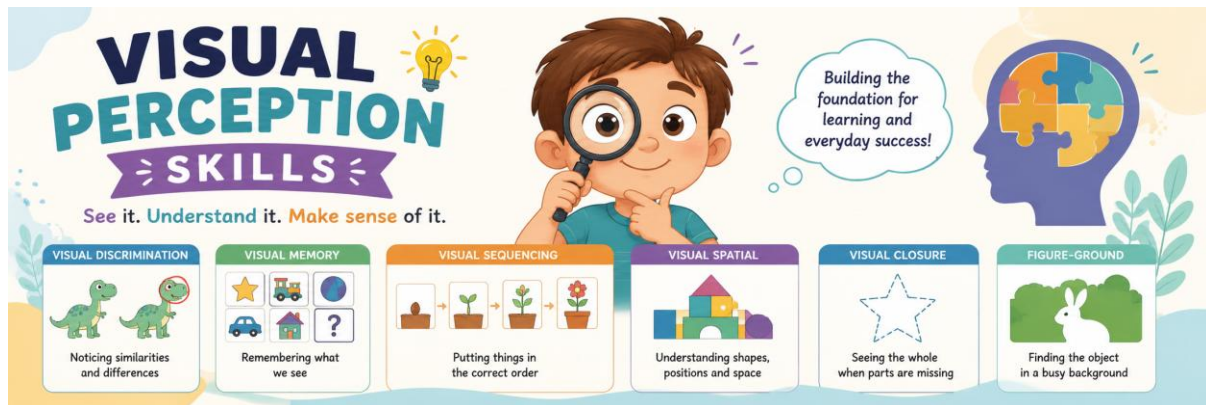




Visual perception

What is visual perception?

Visual perception is the way we know and understand the world around us through what we see. It is not just our ability to see things, but our ability to make sense of what we see. Therefore, children who have difficulty with visual perception often find the world a very confusing place.

Visual perception includes:

- Visual discrimination
- Visual memory
- Spatial relationships
- Form constancy
- Sequential memory
- Visual figure-ground
- Visual closure

What is visual discrimination?

The ability to identify and distinguish similarities and differences between objects – looking at size, shape or colour, similarities or differences in the characteristics, arrangements, sequence, and/ or organisation of single or groups of stimuli.

What might I see difficulties with?

- Sorting and categorising objects.
- Recognising shapes and letters.
- Recognising variation in size and colour of objects.
- Completing practical tasks such as construction tasks, jigsaws.

What is visual and sequential memory?

The ability to remember what is seen and to recall visual images of objects, shapes, symbols and movements both individually and in sequence. It is a foundational skill for learning, closely related to other forms of memory (hearing, touch, movement) and is essential for accuracy in copying tasks.

What might I see difficulties with?

- Learning / visualising writing patterns and how to form letters.
- Remembering the sequence from a practical demonstration – maths, science, art, design technology.
- Orientation of letters and numbers.
- Copying from board or book and making notes.

What is spatial relationships?

Visual spatial perception provides us with information about our environment and the relationship of oneself to an object. Later, a child will perceive the relationship of two or more objects to themselves or each other. This will include whether an object is on top of another and underneath, in front or behind, up or down, etc.

What might I see difficulties with?

- Bumping into things or people when moving around.
- Poor awareness of personal space, leading to problems when lining up or sitting next to someone.
- Dressing – getting clothes in inside out/ upside down/ back to front.
- Handwriting problems with orientation of letters/ numbers, size, shape, spacing, placement on the line.
- Knocking things over.

What is form constancy?

The ability to recognize that a shape or object remains the same despite changes in size, position, direction, orientation, and distance e.g. an object is still the same whether it is seen from the top, side, or underneath.

What might I see difficulties with?

Children with visual form constancy problems may have difficulties with:

- Performing age-appropriate daily activities e.g. dressing, road safety.
- Sorting and matching objects, shapes, materials when orientation and size vary.
- Reading materials in different fonts.
- Copying from a book or board which is in a vertical plane onto paper on a desk which is orientated horizontally.

What is visual figure-ground?

The ability to identify and distinguish an object or relevant information from a background/ context that contains irrelevant or distracting information.

What might I see difficulties with?

- Finding objects in tray, on table, on floor, on coat peg, finding specific item from pile of jigsaw pieces or constructional toy pieces.
- Keeping place when reading, completing a worksheet, scanning to find required information.
- Finding details in a picture, on a map, diagram, multiple choice tests, spreadsheets.

What is visual closure?

The ability to recognise an incompletely drawn figure. It is a foundational skill for fluency and speed in reading and spelling.

What might I see difficulties with?

- Visualising the completed task when given component parts e.g. following recipe, assembling a construction from a picture, completing a jigsaw by searching matching parts.
- Precision of letter / shape formations – letters / shapes often not fully closed or spaced accurately.
- Identifying a visual object when part of it is visible therefore making it hard to find what they are looking for.

Strategies to support development of visual perception skills

- Activity book – colouring, mazes, dot-to-dot, complete picture, ‘spot the difference’.
- Art and craft activities - collage, mosaics, paint by numbers.
- Activity books – find all the ‘hidden’ objects, find all the ..., find the odd one out, find the difference/word searches, word hunts, mazes, ‘Where’s Wally?’
- Model making – building 3D models from cubes, Lego®, K’nex, etc., copying from a picture.
- Card games – Happy families, Snap, Lotto, memory pairs, picture and shape dominoes.
- Board games, Connect 4, Snakes and Ladders, Draughts.
- Jigsaw puzzles, posting games, construction toys, mosaics, copying patterns with cubes.
- Bead and peg patterns, lacing cards, threading activities
- Tracing and colouring, trace or colour round a particular shape in a picture
- Transferring a design shape from one grid to another – completing the other half of a picture, or design.
- Worksheets – filling in letters to complete words or fill in words to complete sentences.
- Finding and sorting activities, categorising into sets, colours, shapes, size, textures.
- Play a memory game with several objects on a tray and then cover and ask the child to name them. Over a period of time increase the number of objects on the tray. Also try adding another object to the tray and asking which has been added.
- Covering up objects and slowly revealing them a bit at a time. Start with familiar objects and ask child to guess before the object is totally revealed
- Finding shapes in room or pictures – pick out all shape, round, oblong things, etc
- Familiar objects game – get the child to indicate objects that can be eaten, objects used to clean the house, objects used in the garden, etc., make up scavenger hunt using similar ideas.
- ‘Feeling’ games – recognising shapes, objects, toys by feeling with eyes closed and describing them in detail (circle, square, long, short, hard, soft, thick, thin, big, rough, smooth, cold, etc.)
- I-spy games –ask the child to point to various categories of objects around the room such as red things, wooden things, square things
- Blindfold games following verbal instructions – walk forward, stop, jump right, stop, jump left, stop, jump back.
- Ask your child to identifying shapes drawn on their back.
- Ball skills – throwing and catching, target games, bat and ball games, kicking ball into goal, throwing bean bags into different height boxes.
- Drawing simple maps or reading simple maps.

Classroom strategies to support visual perceptual difficulties

Reduce visual clutter/ distractions

- Important to consider where the child is sat in the classroom such as sitting at front of the classroom so there is less to look at. Minimise distractions such as windows, open doors, colourful displays.
- Encourage child/ young person to keep their desk tidy and reduce visual clutter and distractions.
- Make sure the whiteboard is regularly cleaned and that only the information needed is written up.
- Use whiteboard markers and pens in colours that clearly stand out.

Support visual attention

- To gain child's focus to any activity use a recognised indicator such as a sequence of claps.
- Before giving instructions, say 'look at me' or say the child's name to get their visual attention.

Learning materials ideas

- Provide clear consistent layouts of learning materials. Space out instructions/ questions on a page. Resist temptation to make it look nice by adding visuals which will confuse. Place work on plain paper to provide minimal background distraction and visual clutter.
- Use a blank piece of paper to cover up some information on a handout or in a book so there is less visual information.
- Highlight/ circle important information to allow for easier read and process.
- Use a 'word window' or piece of card with a cut out in centre, to highlight the area of text being read, whilst covering the rest of the text.
- Providing child/ young person with handouts rather than expecting them to read from the board. This should minimise the amount of information to be looked at and it is also easier to process information which is at a closer distance. Or allow child extra time to copy off the board.
- Use visual prompts with boundaries marked by pen or stickers for where to start writing or where they need to start reading from. Boundary markers as to where writing, cutting needs to be and stay within.
- Use larger print sizes, check what font works best for the child/ young person – can they read it. Use clear writing style and font style.
- Using handwriting paper or square grid lined paper to help prompt children to space and size letters consistently.
- Colour coding different lessons on their timetable to recognise different classes more easily.
- Use of large, bold labels may be helpful for them to locate equipment in the classroom.
- Placing an alphabet strip on the desk may support the child/ young person with letter formation.

- Premark the top / bottom and starting side (left) of the page with coloured dots. For example, a green dot, for 'start here' and a red dot for 'don't write beyond this point'.
- Premark paper, indicating space for name, date, subject which indicates ascender / descender lines. Coloured margins could be used as a visual prompt if child struggles to record work at the beginning of each line.