

Trafford Children's Therapy Service

STRATEGIES TO HELP DEVELOP VISUAL PERCEPTUAL SKILLS – Secondary

What is it?

Visual perception is the ability to understand, process and make use of visual information.

Why is it important?

Visual perception is needed for nearly every task we carry out. This includes recognition and identification of shape, colour, etc. and to be able to use the information to make judgements of size, shape, relationship of one object to another.

How you can help:

- Where possible, allow extra time for processing visual data
- In the classroom, avoid presenting visual information in great lengthy chunks of text – instead summarise it more clearly with use of bullet points or highlight key words and sentences.
- Break tasks down into smaller manageable chunks
- Offer you child plenty of every day opportunities to participate in the following activities below

How to help develop visual perceptual skills:

- Use visual clues like pictures and diagrams
- Ensure your child is sitting with a comfortable and supported posture (e.g. feet on the floor, and elbows resting on the table at a 90 degree angle) or is standing up at a vertical surface.
- Don't underestimate the student's difficulty just because they appear verbally strong
- Be aware that any negative behaviour displayed may be a result of the student adopting compensatory strategies. Use a positive approach to replace these with more acceptable behaviours accompanied with lots of verbal explanation.
- Make sure any targets set are achievable.
- Careful consideration should be given to the seating plan to minimise distractions

Strategies and activities to address weak visual and sequential memory

- Consider the use of mind maps and spider diagrams where appropriate
- Place items of a similar classification together and use colour-coding systems and large labelling.
- Establish clear routines in the classroom and at home e.g. after dinner get school bag ready for the next day's lessons.
- Use checklists to ensure you have remembered everything you need.
- Consider seating plan carefully to remove as many distractions as possible and to ensure optimal visual position

- Draw a picture from memory or copying designs, show them a simple design and ask them to reproduce it
- Memorising objects from a picture or looking for detail e.g. what was the time on the clock, what colour were the curtains or how many cups were on the table
- Card games – Solitaire, Rummy
- Anagrams- is a word play. It is the result of rearranging the letters of a word to produce a new word using all the original letters i.e. orchestra =carthorse
- Present a sentence that has been cut up into separate words, rearrange the words to make sense

Strategies and activities to address weak visual spatial difficulties

- Consider the use of 'Brain Gym' to target specific areas of weakness
- Use drama to act out a scenario or historical event
- Give lots of verbal cues and use discussion when teaching something new or when in a different situation and appreciate that they may be reluctant to attempt in novel situations
- In reading, discuss the physical characteristics of a letter/word and link to any known words that are similar or that rhyme e.g. cat/bat/hat
- For those who struggle with the spacing of words when reading text, experiment with coloured overlays – some people find them really helpful
- In spelling, where possible teach new words along with the rest of that spelling family e.g. bright, light, might, night, and ask the student to make up a sentence or a short story incorporating those words, to link it to their own vocabulary and make it more meaningful to them
- Encourage the use of a ruler to keep place when reading or use a reading window to hide the majority of text if they are distracted or overwhelmed by the amount of text
- In maths, use squared paper to help them to align the columns correctly and allow the use of a calculator where possible.
- In maths, highlight or colour code the function symbols (add/minus/multiplied) or make them bigger
- When completing a formula in maths, number the different steps in the order in which they are carried out and give a clear example to refer to
- In writing, put markers at the beginning of the lines to identify a starting point
- Allow extra time for writing – they will be slower than their peers. Provide prepared worksheets to minimise writing and where possible, let them take notes or submit work in the form of bullet points or spider diagrams
- Consider reducing the amount of text they are required to write, whilst still retaining the appropriate level of difficulty
- Highlight key words and information
- Allow the use of a word processor – keyboard skills are easier to master than the visual spatial and fine motor skills needed for handwriting



- Consider whether the student qualifies for any exam concessions such as extra time or a reader and/or scribe
- Make sure any instructions are clear and precise – A child with visual spatial difficulties may not be able to ‘read between the lines’ and fail to interpret information that is obvious to the rest of the class
- Drawing, colouring, mazes, dot to dot
- Decoding secret messages – present a sentence correctly spelt but with the spaces moved so that visually it doesn’t make sense e.g. I love boiled eggs becomes – I lo vebo ile deg gs
- Present half of a picture for them to complete the other half
- Sewing or threading activities – can link to letter/number

Strategies and activities to address weak visual form constancy

- Do lots of sorting and matching activities categorising according to colour, size, shape
- Examine items within the same category that are not an exact visual match
- Constructional activities- woodwork
- Present the same word in different styles, font or colour – the student underlines the same word presented in its different forms
- Make Origami and pottery objects
- Explore how objects look from different angles – from above, behind, underneath
- Make a piece of card with a small hole cut out of it and place it over a picture so that the picture is hidden except for the area visible through the hole. Ask the student to guess what the picture is
- Puzzles
- Select some reading materials with different styles of text and look through it with them identifying and discussing any difficulties
- Closed eye/feely bag activities



Strategies and activities to address weak visual figure ground

- Use a ruler to keep place when reading
- In the classroom avoid unnecessary clutter
- Make hand-outs simple, clear, precise and avoid unnecessary detail or pictures
- Highlight key points and information so the student can home in on it more easily
- Where possible, colour code charts and graphs
- When looking for an object in a bag or cupboard, teach student how to visualise that object or look for distinguishing features e.g. a DVD is rectangular and flat
- Consider seating plan carefully to reduce distractions as much as possible
- Jigsaws of increasing complexity
- Crosswords/quiz words and Sudoku

- Colouring by numbers
- Board games
- Making/copying patterns
- Word/letter/number/symbol search on a busy page
- Scanning tracking activities – circling the same word in a text
- Odd one out picture cards
- Use reading markers – square cut out in the middle of a card
- Discriminating objects in a room e.g. find all the red objects, the square objects or all the wooden objects
- Find a fairly detailed picture and ask the child to find specific objects in that picture
- Write alphabet or words inside the squares on graph paper.

Strategies and activities to address weak visual closure

- Be aware that students may be unable to predict outcomes and where possible, offer both visual and verbal cues
- Provide a template containing key words and information
- When completing a formula in maths, number the different steps in the order in which they are carried out and give a clear examples to refer to
- In maths – use concrete objects where possible and provide templates for drawing shapes, graphs and charts
- Use drama to act out different scenarios
- Use bullet points or spider diagrams as prompts to get their ideas down on paper, which they can then build upon and develop further
- Where possible, provide a key to clarify abbreviations, symbols or formulas
- In art, textiles and design and technology, let them have an example of the finished product on hand, to help them visualise the end result
- Read short stories together and discuss what might happen next – examine all the possible outcomes
- Look at pictures together and ask student to describe what is happening, or use a series of pictures and ask them to think of a story about them
- Complete pictures in which only parts of objects/shapes are revealed.
- “What is missing” worksheets or spot the difference
- Building three-dimensional models from cubes, cylinders, and blocks
- Connect broken lines to complete a shape or form.
- Draw only half a number, letter or picture and ask the child to match it to a completed version.

