

# Visual Perception/Processing Challenges

Visual perception or processing issues are challenges with understanding, processing, and executing on visual information. It is important to note that this is not a problem with vision; in fact, students with visual perception problems will pass a vision test easily but then may struggle to notice the difference between a triangle and a square!

Visual perception issues are often very complex as they affect many different areas. Visual processing issues can interfere with learning but also impact day-to-day life such as sorting clothes or playing sports. It can result in problems with reading, math, and understanding charts, maps, and pictures.

## TYPES OF VISUAL PERCEPTION/PROCESSING ISSUES

- **Visual discrimination:** difficulty seeing differences in similar letters, shapes, or objects; often characterized by confusing b/d or p/q
- **Visual figure-ground discrimination:** difficulty observing or 'pulling out' shapes against a background; this can make reading comprehension extremely challenging
- **Visual sequencing:** difficulty with recognizing the order of things on a page; students might skip words or lines or even switch/reverse the order
- **Visual-motor:** often recognized as hand-eye coordination problems; writing within the lines is hard, and copying from a book/board may be a challenge; these students may also appear clumsy
- **Visual memory:** difficulty remembering what has been seen; this may result in challenges with reading and spelling as well as using calculators and keyboards
- **Visual-spatial:** difficulty telling where objects are in space, for example, how far objects are apart from each other; this includes objects and characters described on paper or in a spoken narrative; reading maps and judging time can be a challenge
- **Visual closure:** difficulty identifying something if it is only partially visible, or filling in the missing pieces; this can be challenging when drawing and in spelling
- **Letter/symbol reversal:** switching letters or numbers when writing

## COMMON ISSUES WITH VISUAL PERCEPTION ISSUES

- **Academic challenges:** Students have difficulty with reading, writing, and math. They also have difficulty copying from the board and organizing the layout of

their work. They may lose their place when reading and tracking where others are if others are reading aloud to them. Students may confuse common signs, for example mixing up + and -.

- **Emotional challenges:** Students with visual perception problems are likely to fall behind at school leading to frustration and poor relationships with peers.
- **Misdiagnosis:** Students with visual perception problems often appear as if they have dyslexia or attention difficulties. This can lead to inappropriate help and support often leading to more confusion for the student.
- **Life skills:** Visual processing issues can make simple tasks hard, from matching socks to learning phone numbers. Children may seem uncoordinated and will often run into things.

## HOW WE SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH VISUAL PERCEPTION ISSUES

- ✓ Colouring, highlighting, and adapting worksheets to simplify the volume of visual information
- ✓ Using repetitive Direct Instruction delivered in different modalities
- ✓ Training on assistive technology, typing skills or alternative writing mediums to support writing challenges
- ✓ Providing multisensory feedback when completing tasks
- ✓ Supporting development of accommodations such as large print, simplifying websites, and object reading guides
- ✓ Integrating fine and gross motor development activities into class time

**“There will be times where I just brake (sic) down crying because it’s too much for me to handle and take in, like physically my brain can not handle that much. Taking things step by step is often the best way for me to fully comprehend the math subject or equation. Sadly it’s super time consuming but if I don’t take it step by step everything gets jumbled up.”**

- Julia



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