

INFORMATION SHEET – VISUAL DISCRIMINATION

Visual discrimination is part of visual perception.

Visual discrimination is the ability of a child to be aware of the exact characteristics and distinctive features of forms including shape, orientation, size and colour. It provides the ability to distinguish subtle differences and to identify if something does or does not belong.

When reading, this skill helps children distinguish between similarly spelled words such as **was/saw**, **then/when**, **on/one**, or **run/ran**. Visual discrimination problems may cause someone to confuse words with similar beginnings or endings, or even entire words.

Visual discrimination is a frequently used skill and develops at a very early age. When the skill is not developed fully, the letters **b** and **d** look very alike, and circles and ovals both appear 'round' because the slight difference in shape is hard to notice.

When reading passages, someone with a visual discrimination deficit may omit whole words or even lines of text. Equally they may insert words that do not appear in the passage. Someone who is unable to discriminate their place in the text, finds it very hard to absorb what they are reading let alone understand it.

Visual discrimination also refers to a child's ability to differentiate between objects and forms, and this skill is therefore important for identifying and exchanging money and matching and sorting objects. A deficit may contribute to problems in dressing such as matching shoes or socks, and in matching two-dimensional objects to their three-dimensional equivalents. Visual discrimination is a skill of 'reading readiness' that is taught a great deal in preschool and that benefits from practice.

Symptoms of Visual Discrimination Deficit

A child with a visual discrimination difficulty may have problems with:

- Matching tasks e.g. numbers, letters, shapes, symbols, words;
- Recognising differences between shapes, size, colour, letters, words and objects;
- Recognising letters and numbers;
- Reversals or inversions when writing numbers and letters;
- Poor or unusual punctuation;
- Capital letters used inappropriately;
- Being inattentive or disorganised.

Ideas for Activities

Visual discrimination is a skill that can be improved. Children who have a problem may tend to avoid the puzzles and games necessary to develop good visual discrimination skills so need lots of encouragement. Good games include:

- *Odd one out* – objects by colour, shape, size or by use (e.g. apple, orange, banana, cup);
- *Spot the difference* - searching for visual similarities and differences between two pictures or words;
- *Match the detail* - matching a picture of a detail (such as a window) to the picture from which the detail comes (such as the house that has that window);
- *Snap* - matching a range of pictorial cards;
- *Dominoes* - matching picture to picture or matching silhouettes (pictorial or shapes) or word to word;
- *Circle the different word* - prepare a sheet consisting of sets of words. One word in each group will be different. The object is to circle the different word, for example:

can	can	con	can	can	can
big	big	big	pig	big	big
was	was	was	was	was	saw
see	sea	see	see	see	see
sent	sent	sent	cent	sent	sent

- *Letter search* – using old newspapers or magazines, designate a specific letter or number for the child to find in as many different sizes and styles as possible. Each find can be circled or cut out and pasted onto a sheet;
- *Word searches* – find them at www.word-search-world.griddler.co.uk
- *Balloon the punctuation* - Using old newspapers or magazines, designate a particular punctuation mark which the child has to circle with a crayon or marker pen;
- *Find the letter* - write a word and ask the child find all the words in a story book that begin with the same letter. As a variation, the child can find all words that end in the same letter;
- *Scoring the news* – using a passage from an old newspaper or magazine, ask the child to circle and count letters and/or words such as:
 - all of the "e's" or another designated letter;
 - each instance of a designated word such as "*the*";
 - the first word in each sentence;
 - the last word in each sentence;
 - all double letters;
- *Egg carton sort* – give the child an assortment of objects (e.g. buttons, beads, screws) and ask them to sort them into different egg-carton sections according to size, colour and/or shape. The difficulty of the activity can be varied by changing the number of objects to be sorted and the degree of similarity between them.

Other ideas for activities can be found on the following websites:

www.eyecanlearn.com

www.thekidzpage.com/learning