

Vision & Learning Center

Advanced Eye Care

CHECKLIST OF OBSERVABLE CLUES TO CLASSROOM VISION PROBLEMS

1. APPEARANCE OF EYES

- One eye turns in or out at any time
- Reddened eyes or lids
- Eyes tear excessively
- Encrusted eyelids
- Frequent styes on lids

2. COMPLAINTS WHEN USING EYES AT DESK

- Headaches in forehead or temples
- Burning or itching eyes after reading or desk work
- Print blurs after reading a short time
- Complains of seeing double
- Words move or "swim" on the page

3. BEHAVIORAL SIGNS OF VISUAL PROBLEMS

- Head turns as reads across page
- Loses place frequently during reading
- Needs finger or marker to keep place
- Short attention span in reading or copying
- Frequently omits words
- Writes up- or downhill on paper
- Rereads or skips lines unknowingly
- Orients drawings poorly on page
- Repeats letters within words
- Omits letters, numbers, or phrases
- Misaligns digits in number columns
- Tilts head extremely while working at desk
- Squints, closes or covers one eye

- Odd working posture at desk activities
- Must feel things "to get the idea"
- Eyes not used to "steer" hand movements (extreme lack of orientation, placement of words or drawings on page)
- Writes crookedly, poorly spaced; cannot stay on ruled lines
- Misaligns both horizontal and vertical series of numbers
- Uses hand as "spacer" to control spacing and alignment on page
- Repeatedly confuses left-right directions

4. VISUAL FORM PERCEPTION

- Fails to recognize same word in next sentence
- Reverses letters and/or words in writing and copying
- Difficulty recognizing minor differences
- Repeatedly confuses words with similar beginnings and endings
- Fails to visualize what is read silently or aloud

5. REFRACTIVE STATUS

- Quickly loses interest in reading
- Blinks excessively at desk tasks or reading
- Holds book too close
- Makes errors in copying from board or computer to paper
- Squints to see board
- Blinks to see board after reading
- Rubs eyes during or after short periods of visual activity

Any of these signs requires observation. If you suspect a visual problem, refer to an optometrist who is able to diagnose and treat vision-related learning disabilities.

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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO CLASSROOM VISION PROBLEMS

School personnel and clinicians can use this **GUIDE** and **CHECKLIST**. It can assist in making reliable observations of visual behaviors that interfere with a child's academic progress. To use this guide, one must first recognize the difference between the terms **SIGHT** and **VISION**. *Sight* is merely what results from the eye's response to light. *Vision* is the interpretation of what is seen, and results in the child understanding the information. Many children who demonstrated 20/20 eyesight still exhibit visual problems.

EYE MOVEMENT SKILLS (Ocular Motility)

These skills involve the speed and the control of scanning and inspection of learning materials. **Problems** in this area of vision may appear while a child is doing near tasks. Eye movements that are slow, uncoordinated, or jumpy reduce the child's efficiency. If a child has problems with eye movements, the observable difficulties and confusions become more obvious when the child must stay with near tasks for an extended time. The child avoids visually demanding tasks, head movement while reading increases, attention span on visual materials shortens, and fatigue and restlessness during visual activities at the desk increases.

EYE TEAMING SKILLS (Binocularity)

The paired eyes and all their reciprocating muscles enable sight to work with a high degree of "teaming," performing as one. Lack of full eye teaming skill impairs the accuracy of judgments of spatial orientation and depth perception. **Problems** in this area of vision will contribute to general clumsiness, and squinting, blinking and extreme postures may also attract the teacher's attention. A child with this problem may fall behind in school, show preference for listening activities, or lose interest in school.

EYE-HAND COORDINATION SKILLS

Ability and proficiency in this area of performance depend on the integration of the eyes and hands as *paired learning tools*. Producing drawn and written figures depends on the skill and accuracy of eye-hand integration. **Problems** in coordination will cause a child's dependency on hands for inspection and exploration of materials. Paperwork may be sloppy, may show a lack of orientation and an inability to stay within the lines while coloring. If this problem is not addressed early, expressive disorders can occur in later grades.

VISUAL FORM PERCEPTION (Visual Comparison, Visual Imagery, Visualization)

This skill of visual imagery allows the child to relate experiences to the pictures and words seen on a page. **Problems** in this area are frequently blamed on "poor memory" or "carelessness about details." Educators commonly observe a confusion of similarities or inattention to slight differences that really count. Another sign is the reversal of letter forms and/or sequences in words.