

## **Visual Skills**

As children learn letters in early grades, they rely heavily on visual information for guidance of movement and self-correction. Before learning to produce a motor pattern to form a shape, number or letter, a child needs an image or idea of what the desired form looks like. Visual information is important for developing this idea which is then used for determining the correct motor pattern to be produced and for comparison with the result for self-correction.

Visual perception overlaps with many other psychological processes, including attention, memory, sensory integration (functioning of 2 or more sensory systems simultaneously), problem solving, concept formation and simultaneous processing. Because of this, there are many reasons why a child might have difficulty processing visual information, including weakness in any of the above areas as well as weak ability to process visual information specifically. Difficulties with any of the above processes, or combinations of them, are commonly seen in children with developmental variations or learning disorders.

Some children with weak visual perception have great difficulty imagining what a letter, number or shape is supposed to look like (visualization). Weak visualization skills may cause difficulty with learning of sight words, spelling, confusion in geometric shapes, and sense of direction.

A child may have well developed visual and motor skills but be unable to integrate them. Or they may have a weakness in a specific area of visual perceptual or motor coordination skill. Your occupational therapist may recommend any of the following to assist your child/student to improve overall visual skills:

- Strengthen overall visual motor coordination skill
- Strengthen specific visual perceptual skill
- Strengthen visual tracking/scanning ability
- Reduce visual stimulation to improve visual attention
- Use of a multi-sensory approach for written output (reduce the need for visual guidance while improving visualization)
- Use of compensatory strategies (Adaptations to accommodate weak visual-motor skill)

Contact your occupational therapist with the Vancouver Paediatric Team for further discussion of strategies to assist with your student's learning goals.