



# What is Visual Perception?

**Visual Perception** is how we see and interpret all of the visual information that is around us. For your pre-schooler, visual perception is still developing, and will continue to develop right through primary school.

Although most children develop the ability to focus visually and to make fine discriminations in visual materials as they grow, some children will take longer to develop these skills, and may need some additional help, or additional practice.

Visual perceptual processing is very important, but especially so when learning. Without visual perceptual processing, your child would not be able to accurately learn to read, give or get directions, copy from the board or from a book, visualize objects or past experiences, remember things visually, have good eye-and coordination, integrate visual information with our other senses to do things like ride a bike, play ball, or hear a sound and be able to visually recognize where it is coming from (like an ambulance), just to name a few.

Children who have difficulty processing visual stimuli may show some of the following difficulties:

- Lack of coordination and balance (clumsy)
- Difficulty learning left and right
- Reverses letters or numbers when writing or copying
- Difficulty with activities involving rhythm
- Not good at sports
- Does not cross the midline when doing tasks (switches objects from hand to hand)
- Does not use non dominant hand for support when writing or copying
- Rotates body when writing or copying (again to not cross the midline)
- Trouble learning the alphabet
- Trouble recognizing words
- Mistakes words with similar beginnings
- Confuses minor likenesses and differences
- Does not recognize the same word if repeated again on a page
- Trouble with remembering and writing letters and numbers
- Distractible
- Short attention span
- Problems concentrating
- Traces or touches figures
- Difficulty with understanding instructions
- Hyper or hypo active



Because visual perception is so complicated, it is broken up into different areas, which include:

**Figure Ground:** Being able to attend to or search for something specific, and ignore irrelevant information. ex: Looking for a blue pencil in a box full of colored pencils.

**Visual Form Recognition/Discrimination & Constancy:** Being able to discriminate differences. This includes differences of size, shape, color and orientation. ex: Recognizing that a shape when it has been turned onto its side, is still the same shape.

**Visual Closure:** Being able to recognize visual clues and then determine the appearance of the final product without all the details being present. ex: Recognizing what will appear in a picture, or on a dot to dot puzzle before it has been completed.

**Visual Spatial Memory:** Being able to remember the location of an object. ex: Remembering a lost or hidden object.

**Visual Sequential Memory:** Being able to view and then recall a sequence of numbers, letters or objects in the order they were originally presented. ex: A phone number or a row of colored beads.

Once all of these skills are developed, it is important that they become automatic so they take up less brainpower to use. Just like learning to drive a car. At first, it takes a lot of brainpower to get your feet to move the right way and for you to time it with what your hands do. Not only are you learning a new skill, but you also have to make sure you pay attention to the road and steer accordingly. Once you get the hang of it, the ability to shift gears became automatic and you can devote that brainpower to eating an ice cream and talking on the mobile phone along with everything else (not recommended, by the way).

In order to have efficient visual perception skills, you have to learn the skills well to the point where they become easy, and this takes practice!

