



National Center *for* Learning Disabilities

The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed

Visual Processing Disorders

Challenges & Strategies by Age Group



Basics you should know about visual processing disorders:

- Visual processing disorders are also known as visual perceptual processing disorders
- They affect how the brain perceives and processes what the eye sees.
- These disorders can occur without impaired vision of any kind.
- Like all learning disabilities, visual processing disorders can be a lifelong challenge.
- People with visual processing disorders have problems with the way they interpret information, but what others will notice in people with these disorders is the behavior that happens after the difficulties occur.
- There are several types of visual processing disorders, each affecting different aspects of visual information processing - see "Visual Processing Disorders in Detail" for more information.

Visual Processing Disorders at Different Ages

Many people experience problems with learning and behavior occasionally, but if a person consistently displays difficulties with these tasks over time, testing for visual processing disorders by trained professionals should be considered.

Early Childhood

Common difficulties:

- Misunderstanding or confusing written symbols (example: +, x, /, &)
- Easily distracted, especially by competing visual information
- Writing within margins or on lines or aligning numbers in math problems.
- Judging distances (example: bumping into things, placing objects too close to an edge)
- Fluidity of movement (example: getting out of the way of a moving ball, knocking things over)
- Differentiating colors or similarly shaped letters and numbers (example: b, d; p, q; 6,9; 2,5).

Accommodation & modification strategies:

- Use books, worksheets and other materials with enlarged print.
- Read written directions aloud. Varying teaching methods (written and spoken words; images and sounds) can help promote understanding.
- Be aware of the weakness but don't overemphasize it. While helping a child work on the weakness is important; it is just as important to build other skills and function in any setting.
- Break assignments and chores into clear, concise steps. Often multiple steps can be difficult to visualize and complete.
- Give examples and point out the important details of visual information (the part of a picture that contains information for a particular question).
- Provide information about a task before starting to focus attention on the activity.

School-Age Children

Common difficulties:

- Organizing and solving math problems
- Finding and retaining important information in reading assignments or tests
- Writing coherent, well-organized essays
- Copying from board or books
- Sewing or other types of fine motor activities
- Writing neatly and quickly
- Reading with speed and precision.

Accommodation & modification strategies:

- Allow student to write answers on the same sheet of paper as the questions or offer opportunities for student to explain answers orally.
- Provide paper for writing and math work that has darker or raised lines to make the boundaries more distinct.
- Organize assignments to be completed in smaller steps instead of one large finished product.
- Use a ruler as a reading guide (to keep focus on one line at a time) and a highlighter (to immediately emphasize important information).
- Provide a tape recorder to supplement note-taking.
- Have a proofreading buddy for notes and essays.

Teenagers & Adults

Common difficulties:

- Accurately identifying information from pictures, charts, graphs, maps, etc.
- Organizing information from different sources into one cohesive document
- Finding specific information on a printed page (example: getting a number out of the phone book)
- Remembering directions to a location

Accommodation & modification strategies:

- Color code important information.
- Have a proof-reading buddy for all written materials.
- Use a tape recorder when getting important information.
- Before writing letters or essays, create an outline to simplify and organize ideas.

