

UNDERSTANDING VISUAL PERCEPTION

What is Visual Perception?

Visual perception refers to the brain's ability to interpret and give meaning to what the eyes see. It's not about clarity of sight (that's eyesight), it's about how the brain processes visual input for recognition, organization, memory, and spatial understanding.

These skills are essential for reading, writing, dressing, copying from the board, navigating spaces, and nearly every classroom or ADL task.

Skill	What It Means	What You Might See
Visual Discrimination	Telling the difference between similar forms or symbols	Mistaking letters (b/d/p), confusing shapes or sizes
Visual Memory	Remembering visual information after seeing it	Difficulty recalling spelling words or directions
Visual Spatial Relations	Understanding object placement in space relative to self or others	Letter reversals, poor spacing, body awareness issues
Visual Form Constancy	Recognizing objects regardless of changes in size, position, or environment	Trouble recognizing familiar letters in different fonts or handwriting
Visual Sequential Memory	Recalling a sequence of visual information	Skipping words or steps in tasks; spelling errors
Visual Figure-Ground	Finding an object in a busy background	Struggles with scanning worksheets, finding items in clutter
Visual Closure	Identifying a complete object when only parts are visible	Difficulty recognizing partially covered words or shapes

Common Signs of Visual Perceptual Challenges

- Poor handwriting or spacing
- Difficulty copying shapes, letters, or from the board
- Messy or disorganized work
- Avoidance of puzzles, mazes, or visual games
- Trouble following multi-step directions
- Appears clumsy and has poor balance / coordination despite normal motor strength

Visual Perception ≠ Visual Efficiency

It's important to differentiate visual perceptual problems from **visual efficiency** issues (like tracking, convergence, and accommodation). These can coexist, but addressing only one may leave functional gaps in performance.

Clinical Integration Tips

- Use multi-sensory strategies (tactile, auditory) to support visual processing
- Pair everything with movement for better integration
- Refer for a developmental vision evaluation if symptoms persist despite OT or SLP support
- Collaborate with vision therapy optometrists when functional progress is limited by visual skills

Next Steps

Visual perception shapes how a child navigates their environment, understands symbols, and builds confidence in their abilities. Understanding these skills helps guide better intervention plans and more effective collaboration across disciplines.