

SENSE OF VISION (5-12 Years)

Question 4: Does your child become frustrated when trying to find objects in competing backgrounds e.g. trying to find a toy in a toy box or trying to find a particular sock in a drawer?



Strategies and Suggestions

As an adult you know how frustrating it can be to find the matching pair for a sock in the laundry basket, however you keep searching because you know it might be there. Some children really struggle to spot a sock in their sock drawer, find a specific jumper in a pile of clothes or locate a favourite toy in the toybox. This is because looking for an item against a busy or cluttered background is a challenging visual task.

We refer to this ability as 'figure ground discrimination' and it is a difficult skill to master; for children who process vision differently it can be a hard lesson to learn indeed. Being organised helps massively!!



- Don't assume that because you can find something easily that the child can too!
- Use drawer dividers to separate small items of clothing out into clearly defined compartments. Have specific places for different items of clothing i.e. pants in one drawer, t-shirts on one side of a wardrobe and jumpers on the other.



- Keep toys in separate clearly labelled boxes, and your child's favourite, most often used toys in a basket.
- Minimise visual stimuli in your child's bedroom by using plain bedding and pattern free carpet.
- Practice developing this skill in a non-pressured way; make a game out of finding specific items laid out in a tray with 4 or 5 other items on it. Make this harder by adding more toys as your child becomes more able.
- Look at busy pictures in a book together and see if your child can spot various items.

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Question 8: Can your child be startled when being approached suddenly?



Strategies and Suggestions

- Children can get a surprise if they are approached suddenly, especially if they do not process visual information as quickly as the rest of us. They can become quite upset or angry when this happens so please be aware of this if you are walking up to them.
- When approaching them move towards them slowly, say their name clearly and try and approach them from the front or side rather than from behind.



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Question 9: Is your child very cautious when going down stairs or stepping off a kerb when crossing the road? Do they step over a join between two different floor coverings e.g. when carpet joins kitchen linoleum?



Strategies and Suggestions

If your child is not processing depth perception accurately they may tend to feel their way with their feet when moving across thresholds at doorways or where one floor covering meets another. As they walk downstairs you may observe them use the back of their foot to check where the edge of the step is and then slide their foot and ankle over the stair tread until they feel the step below.

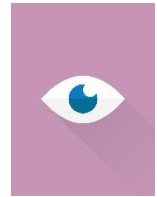
- Let your child take their time when going down stairs, walking off a kerb or crossing over different floor coverings. You can go slowly in front of them to show them it is ok.
- They need to be able to see clearly where they are going and to feel with their feet. Simple things such as clearly marking the edge of steps with neon tape, keeping obstacles to a minimum in the house and classroom environment, and even making sure the child's fringe is not obstructing their vision can all help.



- Children can become upset, angry or fall over if they feel rushed or get pushed by other children so allowing them to leave class a few minutes before the rush at break-time, and return a few minutes earlier than their peers can also help.

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Question 10: Is your child easily distracted by nearby visual stimuli e.g. pictures, items on walls, windows or other people moving around?



Strategies and Suggestions

Some children struggle to concentrate in a busy room. It can be hard to focus your attention on the teacher if you are fascinated by the murals or wall and window displays, or continue to look at the person talking to you if the TV is playing in the corner. Whilst mild distraction is fairly common, particularly amongst younger primary aged children, as a child matures they should be able to focus on the person talking to them or the book they should be reading without being sidetracked by other visual information around them.



Consider carefully where the child is sitting when they are being asked to concentrate in school or complete homework at home. Simple environmental changes are normally all that is required to reduce distraction and increase concentrations.

- Can you give them a blank wall to look at with no distractions?
- Can you use baffle boards or pop-up screens to section off a low stimulus space?
- Can you pull the blinds to stop them looking out the window?
- Consider where the child's desk is in relation to pathways around the class? Is there a seat that gets the least amount of passing traffic?



Please think about these things before you get annoyed at them for not concentrating.