



STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT VISUAL DIFFICULTIES



GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Visual breaks
- Processing time
- Resources should be clear with a distinct background/foreground contrast
- Clutter free environment
- Optimised positioning to maximise visual access
- Ensure pathways are clear of obstacles, bags, equipment, and temporary hazards
- careful consideration of classroom / environment layout – children with vision difficulties are at risk of trips,/falls/bumping into unseen items
- provide individual copies of displayed information (e.g. from a presentation on the IWB)
- Teach routes to key areas (such as toilets, lunch hall, etc)
- Referral to local Visual Impairment Services and/or Habilitation Support Services
- Consider Exam Arrangements and adaptations early



READING & WRITING



- Picture books for young children with clear outlines, good colour contrast and uncluttered pages
- For visual field loss – systematically scanning visual materials during any visual and visual motor tasks (this will need to be explicitly taught)
- Columns of text may be easier to read than whole pages of un-columned text.
- Some children benefit from coloured overlays
- Ensure that the child is aware of the whole array of objects and both pages in a book e.g. by feeling the whole object, left, top, right and bottom, and by pointing to both pages, starting from the left
- Magnifiers
- Large print guidelines: increase font to 14 to 18pt print in order to reduce visual stress (or specific font dependent on child and advice given)
- Zoom /enlarge text onscreen and use of highlighters
- Use paper with raised lines
- Provide “fat” pencils, felt-tipped markers and crayons
- Bold lined paper
- Explore different width lined paper
- Adapted keyboard including on PC/IPAD
- Speech to text recognition software



MATHS



- Use real objects and equipment
- Concept development and mathematical literacy, e.g. classification, verbal counting, one-to-one correspondence, understanding shape, comparison,
- matching, sorting, ordering, shapes, time concepts, early fractions
- Raised location dots to indicate where a task begins and finishes
- Embossed graph paper or create 3D graphs to make them tactile
- Talking calculators with big keys
- Tactile rulers
- RNIB has a wide selection of adapted equipment



PE



- keep the layout of the space as consistent as possible
- use high contrast markings and tactile markers
- use auditory cues, visual instructions, and adapted equipment if possible (e.g. ball with a bell in it)
- remove unnecessary obstacles
- Break skills into smaller, manageable steps
- Allow time to explore unfamiliar equipment safely



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CEREBRAL VISUAL IMPAIRMENT & SENSORY LEARNING



For students at a more sensory level of learning, the following good practice strategies may apply:

- Respect the child and explain in simple terms what will happen next
- Observation before and after visual stimulation - interpret responses carefully
- Give time for the child to process and then even more time to respond
- Breaks in stimulation – no/change of sensory stimuli – reduced verbal input – be reassuring but not afraid of silence
- Move visual stimuli slowly
- Decide on the focus – is it to practice / assess visual skills alone or to encourage looking by using sounds?
- Careful use of touch/verbal cues
- Practice and opportunities to use vision using a sensory room/darkened room for maximum contrast/ having a single item against a dark background for maximum contrast
- Use of sound at times to encourage the child to look
- Control the sensory environment – controlling competing auditory input and tactile input
- Opportunities to be in a distraction -reduced environment when stimuli is too overwhelming, and to practice improving visual attention and processing skills
- Time to locate and process visual information
- Adding extra light when presenting stimuli can be helpful
- Familiarity and repetition. The more familiar an activity and toy or object, the easier it will be to use vision more effectively.
- A “Safe Place” where everything is predictable
- A child’s desire to move or be moved in their wheelchair/seating may possibly be linked to helping them to see better and to stimulate vision
- Moving targets are often easier to see for a child with a CVI
- Not sitting in the glare of sunlight

VISUAL FIELD LOSS



- Seat children so that they do not miss the information on the affected vision side
- Keep in mind that children with visual field loss will not see resources /obstacles /people approaching from outside of their field of vision which can cause distress
- boundary markers are useful when reading, and encouragement to turn head to scan and locate
- Colour coding of left and right margins may be helpful

Sources include: Education After Hemispherectomy A Guide for the Educational Team

For more information on Visual Impairment please visit:

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/>

<https://www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/conditions/blindness-and-visual-impairment/>